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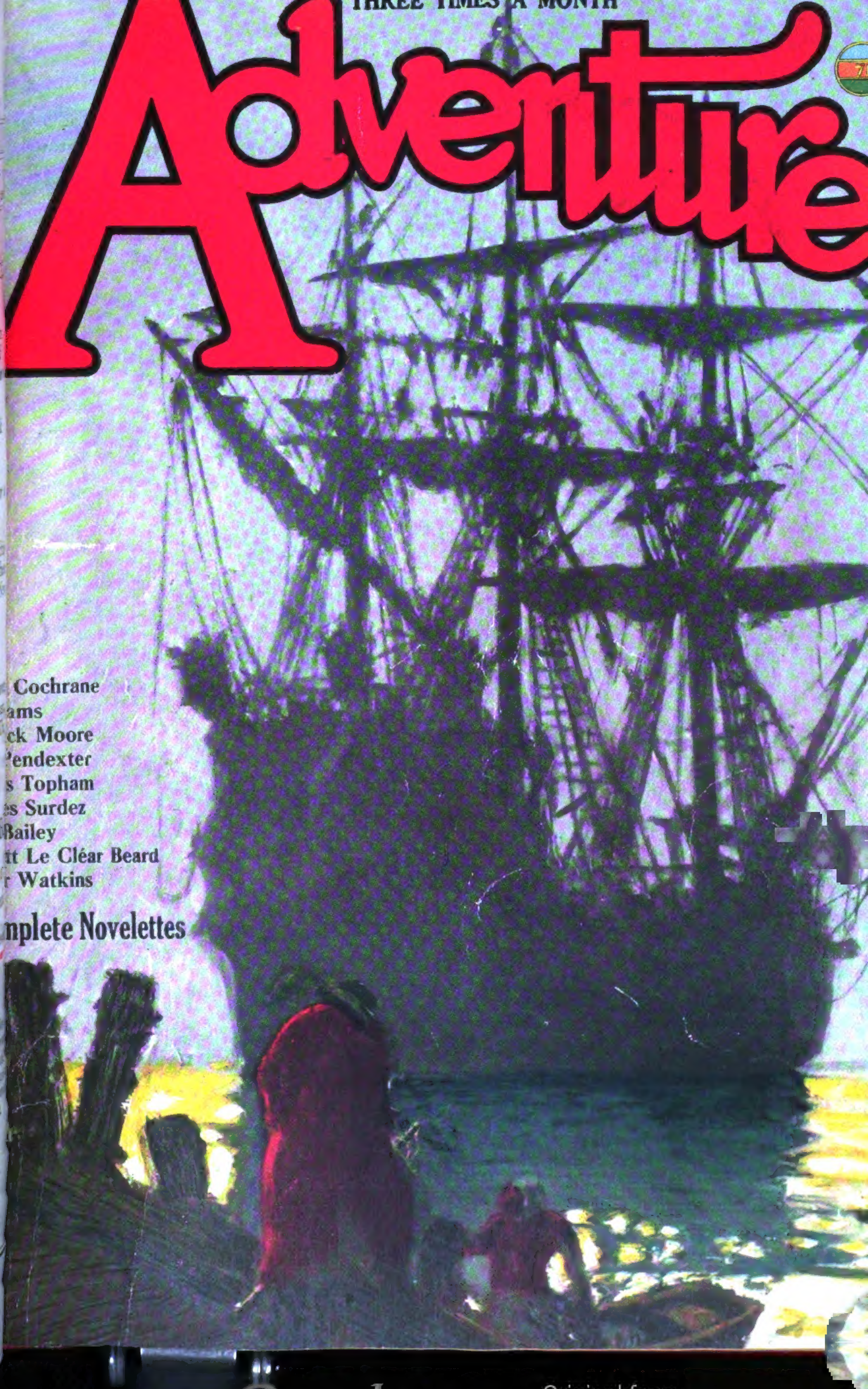
# Adventure



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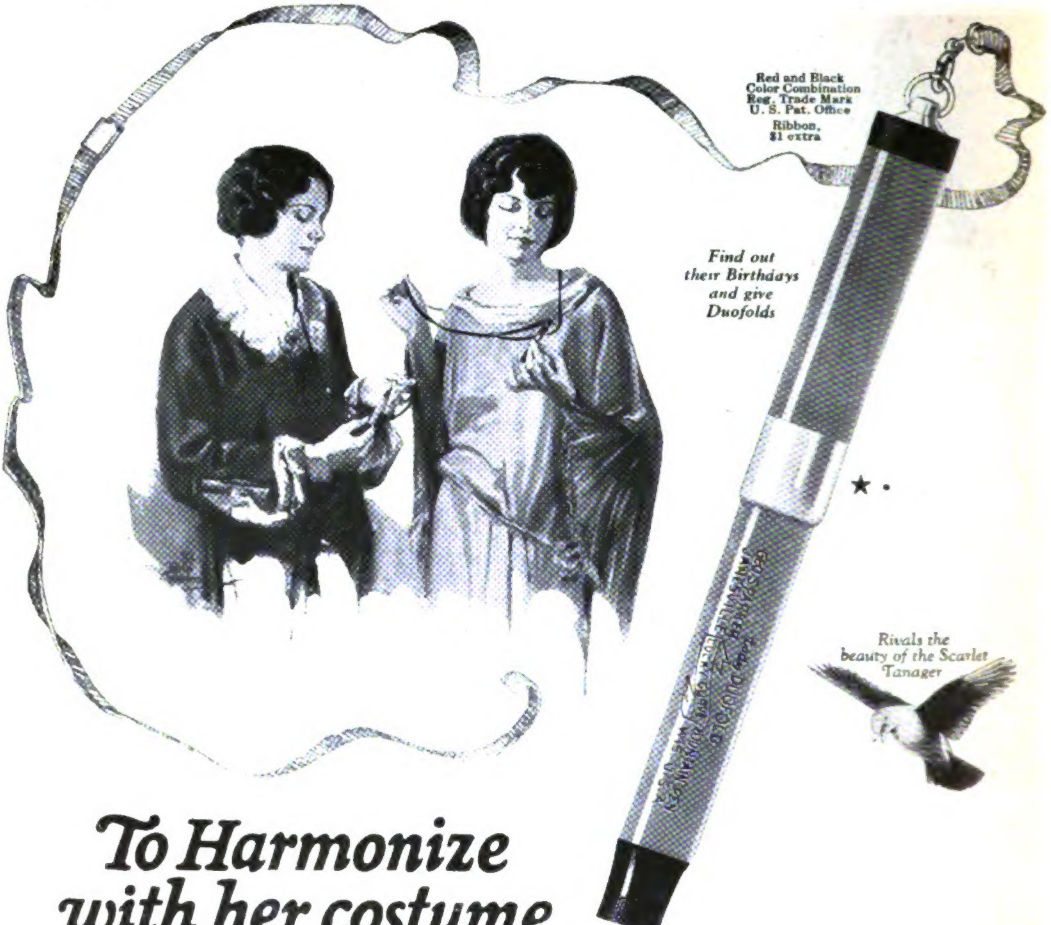

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*Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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## Four Complete Novelettes

"LOOK here, *Durenne*," said *Bayley*, "we stand for no foolishness. We've got you, and you've got to pay." But my name was not *Durenne*; I hated blackmailers, and I was accounted a good shot. "EVERHARD AND THE RUSSIAN COUNT," a complete novel by Gordon Young in the next issue.

AN AUSTRALIAN desert is a strange place for a bad man who has learned his badness in a city slum. "JACKAROO," by J. D. Newsom, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

HE CALLED himself "*Automatic Jack*," and he'd read the whole nickel-novel library. Then he met "*Silk-Saddle Jim*" and threw in his lot with that much wanted man. "BANDIT'S GLORY," by Barry Scobee, a complete novelette in the next issue.

THE American laughed at the voodoo practises of the Trinidad negroes; but his friend, who had been born on the island, knew the terror that was in them. "*OBEAH*," a novelette of the asphalt workers of Pitch Lake, by T. S. Stribling, complete in the next issue.

*Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.*

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Adventure
MAY 30 1924
VOL XLVI NO 6

by
Frederick
Moore

# THREE PASSENGERS FOR LANTU-VANNA

A Complete Novelette

*Author of "The Treasure of Boo-Hoo," "The Taker of Sharks," etc.*

ALL of a sudden Denison understood why the tramp-steamer *Maori Chief* did not sail promptly for Lantu-Vanna. She was scheduled to leave the bay at noon, but she lingered at anchor for more than an hour after tiffin. The reason for the delay came to him as he paced the quarter-deck under the awning and, looking shoreward, saw the *Bucky O'Neil* chugging down the bay and making straight for the *Maori Chief*. The *Bucky O'Neil* was the police-boat—and when she went out in the bay after a steamer about to sail, it generally meant that there was a passenger to be taken off. There was every reason to believe that somebody was going to be arrested before the tramp sailed.

Denison was a young man—at least, not more than thirty. He was dressed in the conventional white duck of the tropics, had a clean-shaven face that was fairly well-tanned, a way of walking that marked him as a man accustomed to having his own way, but nothing of arrogance in his bearing. His eyes were gray and had a little squint about them—something common to most men who spend much time in the strong light of the tropics. As he paced back and forth, he carried a whip-like little bamboo cane, and smoked a cigaret in a long ivory holder.

A keen observer might be surprized that a man of Denison's appearance should take passage in an old tub of a steamer like the *Maori Chief*—she was a rusty hulk with a crew of Malays and Chinese—and while her decks were clean enough, she was really a choice bit of floating junk. But she happened to be convenient for Denison as he wanted to get away to Lantu-Vanna without a minute's delay, and the *Maori Chief* happened to be sailing the very day he wanted to leave Manila. Besides, there were no regular boats on the run to Lantu-Vanna, and Denison had his own reasons for wanting to sail without having a lot of people running about the steamer before she sailed. When liners sail, there are always a lot of friends and relations to see them off. Denison wanted to avoid the usual sailing-day crowd, so it suited his

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purpose to go out to the *Maori Chief* in a native canoe and get away quietly. As for luggage, he had only two bags—a small one and a big one.

There were two other passengers for Lantu-Vanna. They were on the other side of the quarter-deck, also watching the police-boat churn her way down from the Harbor Police Station up beyond the mouth of the Pasig. Denison had looked them over with his keen eyes—had studied them, in fact, with great care. But, so far as he knew, they were totally unaware of the fact that he took special pains in observing them.

One of these other passengers was a short, thick-set man, with gray hair cropped close to his scalp, and over it he wore a little black cap that gave him, at first glance, the aspect of a clergyman. He had a big, fat face. He wore thick-lensed glasses that seemed to shut off his vision rather than aid it, for he went about the deck with his head bent forward like a wise old owl, looking over the tops of the glasses and digging into everything he saw with a cane that suggested a rapier. And he wore a perpetual little grin.

His suit was made of that peculiar gray fabric of loose weave and coarse texture which is much more fitted for use as toweling than wearing apparel; it bagged at the knees, at the elbows and in various other places; it was entirely too big for him, fat as he was. The result was, that he never looked like the same person if looked at with any interval between the views, for his figure always was altering in a most fantastic way—now he looked broad of beam, and again, seen from another angle, he seemed to have become suddenly long-legged, but a man with tremendous shoulders.

He might have been a Swede, yet he appeared to be a Dutchman from Batavia—sallow-faced, for all his fleshiness of jowls. Denison had taken a quiet look at the passenger-list, and knew that this odd-looking man was down as "Engstrom, Peter," and all other particulars were missing as yet. As the *Maori Chief* had no purser Captain Goodwin was a trifle lax in the details of his passengers, and let most things go until he was at sea. Denison wished that he could tell more at the moment about Engstrom.

The other passenger was a young chap who might be anything from a Portuguese to a half-blood Hawaiian. He was not very tall, though his slenderness made him appear so. There was a certain elegance about him; he wore a white suit that was spotlessly clean, and faultlessly tailored, yellow shoes with sharp points to the toes, an expensive straw hat with a silk ribbon banded in blue and red, and he carried a little swagger-stick that had a silver head. His swarthy face was thin, his eyes were brown, and he had a tiny black wisp on his upper lip that was scarcely noticeable except that the ends were waxed and stuck out a quarter of an inch from each side of his mouth.

Everything about him was foreign, from his mincing little walk in the yellow shoes to the dainty little silk handkerchief which he carried in the cuff of his coat when he was not using it to dry the palms of his hands. His name was down in the passenger list as "Rollais, Herbert," but Denison felt that Captain Goodwin had not spelled the surname correctly. It was also possible that Rollais had not been over careful in the spelling when he gave his name to the captain. But there was one thing in the passenger-list that sounded honest to Denison, in respect to Rollais's name—his place of residence was given as Saigon, which seemed a most reasonable place for Rollais to belong.

"Ah, yes, this boat—she is coming to us," said Rollais, as he stood beside Engstrom while they gazed over the water at the police-boat.

"Sure, she is come to us," said Engstrom. "Dot's what we wait for—the captain, he say so to me a little back. Eh, is it not so, Mr. Denison?" he added, turning to Denison and smiling at him.

"Oh, yes, the police always look steamers over before they sail," remarked Denison casually. "The fact that they make a secret observation of people departing from Manila is not so noticeable on liners. There are so many people about on liners that no one is aware that the passengers are being studied. It is done then without attracting any special attention. Besides, as it is done at the dock, nobody seems to mind anyway, but when they have to send out the police-boat—well, it rather makes a parade of what's going on."

"Oh, you think maybe they take somebody away from this ship?" asked Rollais in surprize.

"They take somebody if they vant him," said Engstrom with a trifle more grin. "Sure! You robbed a pank or something?

You killed somebody with a gun? You throw your boots at your waiter? All right! They get you! Also, you not pay your bill, you go back! Ha, ha, ha!"

Rollais made a little face and grinned. He lighted a fresh cigaret, leaned against the rail in a careless attitude, and watched the boat approach. But his interest was only momentary, for presently his eyes roved to the green shore on the Cavite side of the bay, with its white shingle just behind the line of surf; he scanned the near-by shipping outside the breakwater; he gazed at the *cascoes* moving slowly in long lines toward the mouth of the river; looked at the ancient walls of the Luneta Battery behind the line of palm-trees along the Malecon, and gave every appearance of not caring a whit whether the police-boat was coming or going.

Engstrom lighted a cigar as fat as himself, snorted in a way that suggested a water-buffalo disporting himself in a mud-wallow, and threw the burnt match on the clean deck to express his disgust.

"I vish they hurry," he commented. "I vants to get out to where we get some breeze. I not pay my money to ride this ship in and wait for policers to ask qvestions!"

When he was the least bit irritated or excited it seemed that his thick accent came to the surface, and he broke out in v's that should be w's, and p's that should be b's. Ordinarily, he spoke with a remarkable precision. Now he stumped up and down the deck by himself, leaving clouds of smoke behind him, his hands joined under the tail of his coat, and his head bent forward as he glared over his glasses at the deck-planks.

"I wonder—if they should take somebody," commented Rollais.

"They don't want me, that's certain," said Denison with a careless smile.

Rollais shrugged his shoulders and made an elegant gesture with his hand—a gesture that he, also, was not concerned at all in the errand of the police-boat.

"Not me, they don't want!" spluttered Engstrom through his mouthful of cigar.

Denison laughed.

"Then we'll have a happy time together all the way to Lantu-Vanna," he remarked.

"Will you gentlemen please come forward to the accommodation-ladder?" bawled Captain Goodwin from the saloon-deck. "The police-boat is coming alongside, and if we get the business over without delay, maybe we can run along to where we're going."

## II

DENISON led the way down the ladder, across the well-deck, and up the other ladder to the saloon-deck. As he got abreast of the door to the social-hall, the police-boat was already under the rail, smudging the air with her gassy smoke and cinders and squeezing her rope puddings against the side of the steamer. Two men in civilian white came up the ladder, but for all their lounging gait, there was something decidedly official in their manner. The taller of the two nodded to Captain Goodwin, and smiled mechanically. He was perfectly willing that everybody should know that he was a person of importance.

Captain Goodwin advanced with a yellow sheet of paper, and handed it to the tall man. The skipper looked more like a parson than the master of a tramp-steamer in his frocklike seersucker coat that fluttered almost to his knees. There was benignant good will toward everybody in his gray eyes as they wrinkled behind his *pince nez* glasses. Still, there was a firmness about his jaw that told he was not the man to waste much time with triflers. He had on slippers, and there were crumbs on his lips, for he had just been having a biscuit and tea.

"Here you are, sir," said Captain Goodwin, as he handed over the yellow paper. "Three passengers for Lantu-Vanna—and I doubt any of 'em should be in charge."

He beamed upon the three passengers standing by the door of the social-hall.

All this time the other police official had remained standing at the head of the accommodation-ladder, and with a coldly insolent eye, looked the passengers over with a knowing air, as if there was a surprize in store for somebody.

"Only three, eh?" said the tall man as he scanned the list.

"Only three," repeated the skipper. "And all for Lantu-Vanna. I doubt that there's a pickpocket among them. Or do you want a murderer today?"

And he wheezed asthmatically, as if he had started to laugh but at the last minute had decided to change it into a cough.

"Rollais, Denison, Engstrom," read the tall man. "So that's who they are, eh?"

"That's correct, sir," said the skipper.

The man with the passenger-list swung round on the three men by the doorway. He looked them over with that peculiar ferocity which seemed to quiver under his eyelids. He might have been an ogre selecting a victim for breakfast.

"Which of you gentlemen calls himself Denison?" he asked purringly.

"That's my name," said Denison, stepping forward just a bit.

"If my memory serves me right, I believe that the last time I saw you, the name was different," suggested the tall man.

"I don't remember having seen you before," said Denison.

"I rather thought your memory would be faulty about me—but see if you can't speed it up a little."

"Would you mind telling *me* who *you* are?" asked Denison, with a politeness that was the acme of frigidity.

"Oh, certainly," said the tall man. "My name is Smith—John Smith. Not the chap, of course, who is known to history as having been saved by an Indian princess, but another John Smith— this time a member of the secret service."

"I'm sorry you have to reveal your profession in this way," said Denison. "But I should give a whoop and a hurrah for your secret service."

John Smith sniffed in a superior way, and turned to the captain of the *Maori Chief*.

"Has Mr. Denison—" there was a peculiar inflection put upon the pronunciation of the name— "paid his fare to Lantu-Vanna?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" said Captain Goodwin. "That's all regular. I don't do an installment business in steamship tickets, you know," and again he wheezed, as if quite ready to laugh at his little joke in case anybody showed the slightest willingness to regard it as a joke.

"And what did he pay for his ticket with, if you wouldn't mind telling me?" Now the secret service man mocked Denison's manner of speaking.

"Why, with money!" said the skipper, his face turning red. He was suddenly very nervous, as if somehow there was a chance that he might lose one of his passengers and the passage-money which had been paid, and as if there was something which might, in spite of his honesty, involve him in criminal proceedings.

"What kind of money, captain? That's what I'm trying to bring out!" snapped the detective.

"Oh, American money! Twenty-dollar gold notes—the yellow sort, you know—and some of the local silver. Is—is it likely to be bad? I'm not very familiar with these foreign notes that I run into in these big ports."

"Ah, I thought so!" declared the detective to Denison. "So you're buying passage with twenty-dollar gold notes—American!"

"What do you intend to do about it?" asked Denison.

"That remains to be seen. I'm not taking you into my confidence at this stage of the game. What I want to ask you is, have you ever played poker at the Metropole Hotel—recently?"

"If I didn't feel like answering that question, I wouldn't, but if it'll save a little time for us all, I'm willing to say that I have played poker more or less at the Metropole—and recently."

The tall man turned round and grinned at his companion near the head of the ladder. The grin brought a grin in return.

"And won some money? Mostly twenty-dollar gold notes?"

"Yes. I won," said Denison. "What of it?"

"With marked cards?"

Denison caught his lower lip under his teeth. His eyes narrowed, and his face reddened with anger.

"What are you trying to do?" he demanded. "Make me out a card-sharper—and a criminal! How do you dare to make such an outrageous charge?"

"We might arrest you on several other little charges, if we wanted to," said the detective. "I say, might—but we don't prefer to act at just this minute. And if you come back again, we'll take this matter up again. Not enough evidence of the sort we want at this time, but don't come back to Manila unless you're willing to be arrested. We're glad enough to get rid of you, Mr. —er—what is it? Denison, I think, this time."

"Have you finished?" asked Denison.

"For today, yes," sneered the detective, and turned as if to go to the accommodation-ladder. "Unless you've something to say."

"I've this to say," said Denison quietly. "I'll not only come back to Manila when I'm ready, but I defy you to arrest me. If you could have proved that I used marked cards, you'd have arrested me last week. You couldn't prove it. So you have to let me sail away for Lantu-Vanna. Oh, it's easy for you to come out here in the police-boat and make me look like a criminal among strangers. But you don't dare to arrest me, I notice that. So when I do come back to Manila, I'll make some trouble for you that won't be so easy to settle as it seems. In spite of the fact that you know any of these gentlemen sailing with me may not be back in Manila for months, and that Captain Goodwin may not be back in a year, so none of them may be used as witnesses by me, I'll make it hot for you, my friend. Don't forget that—and unless you can arrest me, I suggest that you go back ashore and attend to your business. It seems to me that the secret service is playing things with a high hand."

"But not with marked cards," retorted the detective over his shoulder.

Captain Goodwin, Engstrom and Rollais, all stared in amazement at Denison. And in Goodwin's look, there was cold suspicion.

"We'll get you yet, young man," said the detective, as he handed back the passenger-list to the skipper, and turned to go down the ladder.

"Will you have a nip of something, sir?" asked Goodwin, all be-fussed with what had happened, and almost ready to take orders of any kind from the secret service man.

The captain suddenly seemed to have acquired the cringing manners of an obsequious servant running after his master.

"Never on duty," replied the detective, and descending the ladder with his companion, hurried aboard the police-boat. In a minute it chugged away, and the anchor of the *Maori Chief* came up with many a creak and groan, as if the world were filled with sadness.

Denison leaned against the rail, aloof now from the other two passengers, who lingered in the door of the social-hall, whispering. Captain Goodwin had climbed to the bridge, and they could hear him swearing at the Finnish mate, who was in the bows overseeing the work of stowing the anchor and making all snug for sea.

There was nothing particularly gloomy about Denison as he stood there at the rail looking after the departing police-boat. In fact, there was a tiny smile lurking about his lips. He turned to the pair in the doorway.

"I never saw such an outrageous thing in all my life!" he said to Engstrom and Rollais. Yet his indignation was only in the words—he was not at all excited. "Not very pleasant, gentlemen," he went on, "to be branded like a criminal by the police just as I'm about to spend three or four weeks in this steamer as a passenger. So if you don't want to have anything to do with a man who has been given a bad character, don't make any bones about it. I'm not going to thrust my company on you."

"Oh, don't you be pothered from dot!" exclaimed Engstrom, with a wave of the hand in the direction of the *Bucky O'Neil.* "Too smart, that couple of svine! Such a thing! ——! For bother people who is a gentleman. Maybe they say the same things to me—how I am to stop it if they did?"

He wagged a head and bit viciously into his cigar.

"A very foolish thing for them to do," said Rollais. "It is insult! Of a certainty, my dear Mr. Denison, we do not care what the police say to you."

And he bowed low to Denison, took the handkerchief from his cuff and wiped his hands.

"Say, skipper, look here!" said Denison, as Captain Goodwin came bustling down from the bridge, "if you think I'm a suspicious character, and you don't want me aboard your steamer, I'll cancel my passage and go back to Manila."

"It strikes me you're a trifle late in wanting to get back ashore," said Captain Goodwin gruffly. "If you had been overeager to get back to Manila, you could have done so a few minutes back—and had a free ride into the bargain."

He went into his cabin and came out with a sextant-box, climbed back to the bridge and gave the engine-room telegraph a lusty clang. The *Maori Chief* trembled, there was a heavy panting from somewhere below, the propeller began to thrash astern, and the tramp headed for the China Sea.

Denison grinned.

"It's plain, gentlemen," he went on to the other two, "that I'm not going to be popular with the skipper of this packet. But I thank you both for your expression of confidence in the face of a very black eye."

"I suggest," said Rollais, "that we three have something to drink, just to start away properly, without any idea that any of us entertain suspicions about the others—and as a triumph over the ungentlemanly officials who have insulted you."

He had a way of expressing himself in stilted phrases.

"Bravo!" cried Engstrom through a cloud of smoke. "I like to see gentlemen act like gentlemen to each other, after such shvine like dot!"

And he made a face after the police-boat.

Denison bowed, and Rollais led the way to the social-hall, where he immediately called for Chan, the Chinese deck-steward, to bring a bottle of wine. And they celebrated noisily, and with much derision of the police of Manila. And, then, further to show their complete trust of Denison, Engstrom and Rollais asked him to play a game of poker with them.

## III

THE three in the social-hall played poker the entire afternoon. The stakes were small and nobody lost much, or won much. All the time Denison was conscious of the fact that he was being studied by Engstrom and Rollais. In other words, they were taking his measure. And more, it was apparent to Denison that there was no agreement between the two to learn what kind of man he really was, but each was working independently.

And in order to encourage Denison to unbend and be perfectly natural with them, they made a point of being very gay, managed to tell much about themselves and where they were from, in the hope that Denison would be equally frank. But Denison proved to be reticent about himself, though he did meet their friendliness with a cordial manner which in some measure made it appear that he was not restraining himself in any way.

Engstrom, who at first had given the impression of being a trifle distant, turned out to be a rollicking good fellow, making jokes at his own expense. When he won a small stake he had a habit of getting up from his chair and waltzing about the social-hall with himself in childish glee.

Rollais was a trifle more sedate, though he entered fully into the spirit of the fun. His manners were faultless, and he was more concerned with enjoying himself, and making the game enjoyable, than in playing a careful game in his own interests. He revealed the fact that money was of no concern to him, and when he ordered wine, displayed a roll of money which made Chan, the steward, blink his eyes. From various remarks which Rollais let drop during the afternoon, the others understood that he was the son of a wealthy planter who owned an island not far from Lantu-Vanna.

The game broke up when the dressing-gong rang just before time for dinner. Denison was the first to arrive in the dining-saloon. He took his seat, and waited for the others, but neither Captain Goodwin, Engstrom, nor Rollais appeared for more than twenty minutes. And the strange thing about the delay was that neither Engstrom nor Rollais was in his cabin.

All the cabins for passengers were in narrow passages that opened on each side of the big stairway which led down from the social-hall to the dining-saloon. In the starboard passage, Denison and Engstrom had cabins which were side by side, while Rollais had a room in the port passage, the stairway being between. Denison knew Engstrom was not in his room, for the door was open, and Denison had glanced in as he came out for dinner.

"Chan, maybe Mr. Rollais not know dinner-time," said Denison to the steward. "Maybe he's asleep—you look-see."

Chan investigated, but returned, shaking his head, and stood patiently behind the seat to be occupied by Captain Goodwin.

It was during this time that Engstrom and Rollais were in the skipper's cabin, up on the saloon-deck under the bridge. They had been summoned by Goodwin, who had advised them not to tell Denison that they were to attend a conference with the master.

"I have asked you gentlemen to come here," said Captain Goodwin, as he closed the door and secured the outside portholes, "to take up a matter with you that I believe you should consider."

He motioned them to the transom-seat and, swinging round the swivel chair at his little desk, sat down and faced them, his face grave and his manner judicial. He twirled his thumbs at his belt-line.

"Please, if you will speak with special freedom," invited Rollais with a nod of his head intended for a bow.

"You two gentlemen," began Goodwin solemnly, "have had an idea of the character—and antecedents—of this other passenger who has honored us with his—er—presence."

He rolled the big words out after the manner of an orator, and scowled over his glasses at the two men on the transom.

"Ve finds him a chentleman," pronounced Engstrom.

"No doubt, no doubt," Goodwin hastened to say. "I'm not attempting to form your opinions. I have nothing to say against Mr. Denison—as he calls himself. Not a word! That is not my business—as yet. But I have noted that you played cards with him this afternoon. That is correct, what?"

"Sure!" said Engstrom. "Iss it forpidden?"

"Oh, no, no!" said Goodwin. "It is all right. I also noted that you played for money. That also is none of my business—but I warn you—if this card-playing turns out badly—" he pursed his lips before going on—"I shall not be responsible."

"How you could be responsible, sir?" asked Engstrom.

"We shall not be holding you responsible for anything, sir," interjected Rollais.

The skipper stood up.

"I've said my say. There is every reason to believe that Mr. Denison is a shady character with a record known to the police. I've seen these things happen before—such as happened today as we were sailing. I don't say anything against Mr. Denison, myself, mind. But I say there is every reason for caution. You may trust him as far as you like—but if you lose money or get in any jam, don't come whining to me about being robbed in this steamer. That's plain talk—but I'm a blunt man—and I'm talking for your good, and not to damage Mr. Denison's reputation in any way—not the slightest—and I hope I've made my position clear to you."

"You think ve going to have good vedder all the way, captain?" asked Engstrom with a wink to Rollais.

"It all depends," said Captain Goodwin.

And a trifle irritated to find that his advice was not being taken with a due regard by his passengers, he sucked his mustache in between his lips, took off his glasses and wiped them sadly.

"Of this we will say nothing," suggested Rollais. "Mr. Denison is to be a passenger with us all the way to Lantu-Vanna, so it is my suggestion that we all treat him as if nothing has happened—and in our dealings with him to be a lot of discretion."

"Sure!" interjected Engstrom. "I say it, also."

"Very well," said the captain. "Let it be so—and now we'll all go below and have a bit of porridge—and be very polite to Mr. Denison."

But for all his pretended willingness to regard Denison as a passenger to be given equal consideration with the others, the skipper had already taken action to thrust Denison into the background. This was apparent when Goodwin arrived for dinner. They all sat at the same side of the long table, Goodwin in the center, with Engstrom on his left and Rollais on his right, while Denison's seat was to the right of Rollais. Thus Denison had little part in the conversation that night.

Captain Goodwin did not address himself directly to Denison during the meal, but chatted with Engstrom and Rollais; whenever Denison got in a word, he made it to one of the passengers.

The skipper left the table early, relieving his chief officer, who stood the first watch. And the mate was impossible as a dinner companion. Goodwin did not take the trouble to introduce the mate, but when he appeared, addressed him as "Mr. John."

Mr. John had every appearance of being a man of low type, mentally. He was a powerful man, with hands that were battered by years of labor at sea. He had a habit of glancing over his shoulder every few minutes—"as if he expected the —— to come and call him," as Engstrom afterwards described it. The mate was a Finn or a Lett, with mild blue eyes, big ears full of crinkly blond hair, long whiskers of reddish hue that began at the sides of his lips and grew down so far that they disappeared in the triangle of his pajama-jacket in front—which seemed to be his idea of a proper mess-coat. He sucked coffee out of a saucer from the beginning to the end of the meal, and when he swallowed food, shot his chin forward like a wolf that had been starved in a blizzard and was afraid he would not get his share of the feast.

"Dit you note-iss?" whispered Engstrom to Denison as Mr. John left the table, "that he haff in his pelt a knife?"

He shut his eyes and made a grimace at

Denison—an expression of disgust mingled with something akin to distrust.

"He looks like a hard customer," admitted Denison. "I'd not like to have an argument with him."

Rollais laughed lightly.

"He is nothing but animal, poor ——," he said with a shrug of his shoulders. "My father is have two of this kind in his plantation—no good to fight, if trouble comes. I could do that—" and he puffed out his cigaret smoke with a *pouff* and made a peculiar gesture with his hand—"and he runs, I bets it!"

"Don't you so confi*dent* pe!" objected Engstrom. "I know of his kind of man—with the knife, quick—so like that!"

And he thrust his thumb with a swift jerk into the smoky air over the table.

"I don't believe that we need worry much about him," said Denison. "We've paid our way in this steamer, and he's nothing to us."

Chan stood behind them, watching the other Chinese boy clear away the dishes. The steamer was rolling along with a gentle motion; the air came in through the open ports with a smooth draft; somewhere an electric fan hummed soothingly. The lights were not all burning, and the dining-saloon was a comfortable place. The three lingered over their coffee and tiny glasses of curacao.

## IV

IT WAS nearly midnight when the three passengers left the table in the dining-saloon. As the steamer drove southward, the wind shifted into that quarter and the *Maori Chief*, below decks, was something of a furnace. In an old-fashioned vessel such as she was, and not designed originally for passenger traffic in the tropics, her inside staterooms were not comfortable as sleeping-quarters in those latitudes.

Denison, finding the heat unbearable, silently left his room and got up on deck in his pajamas. He knew there was a hammock slung under the awning of the quarter-deck, so he made his way aft, crossing the well-deck and climbing up again.

He found the hammock empty, and climbed into it. As it swung with the easy motion of the steamer, and the air was soft and fresh out here, he soon fell asleep.

Before long he was aware that somebody was moving about on the quarter-deck. At first Denison jumped to the conclusion that a seaman had been sent aft to take a reading of the log. But a sailor would have come along smartly, and without any concern for possible sleepers in that direction; instead, whoever it was moving on the quarter-deck, he seemed to be making his way with infinite caution.

As the steamer heeled, and a patch of starlit sky showed itself under the edge of the awning forward, Denison saw a heavy figure moving aft with careful tread—and a pause of a minute or two between each step. He was only a black outline that appeared when thrown in relief against the sky, and then disappeared momentarily when the forward pitch of the steamer brought him into concealment against the blackness of the awning. As he advanced, the stranger kept his balance by edging along the high coaming of the skylight that jutted up through the center of the deck.

In a minute Denison heard the soft scuffing of heelless slippers. That told him that the approaching man was not a Malay sailor, for in that case the feet would be bare. It might be Mr. John, Denison reasoned; but he abandoned the latter theory, for it would be utterly absurd to find the mate lurking about in this manner.

"By George! It's Engstrom!" Denison told himself.

But he did not speak. He wanted to go back to sleep, and he feared that if he admitted he was awake, Engstrom might want to engage in conversation—and Denison had no wish to spend the night talking.

He realized that it was possible that Engstrom had sought the quarter-deck for the same reason that Denison had—to avoid the heat below. But if that were true, why should Engstrom come so furtively, Denison asked himself.

Engstrom was quite close now, and Denison could hear him breathing heavily, as if the Dutchman had run across the well-deck and had mounted the ladder at a rapid pace. The fat man stood for a few seconds leaning against the skylight, his head turned to look behind him. He seemed to be listening to make sure that he had not been followed.

After a few minutes, Engstrom went back to the break of the deck, where he had first appeared, and peered down. There was no moon, but the sky was filled with brilliant stars. The well-deck, a deep depression between the midships super-structure and the quarter-deck, was a pit of swaying shadows. When the steamer was on an even keel, there was an unbroken light upon it, but the roll of the vessel made the reflection of the stars irregular, and black replicas of masts, funnel, bulkheads, and the pile of cargo on the hatch spilled over the deck. Also, from overhead the smoke, which blew straight aft, made a cloud which at times put the well-deck in oblivion.

Having surveyed the deck below, and apparently being satisfied that nobody was below, Engstrom came aft again. He drew close to the hammock. Denison could see him dimly at intervals, though at times the Dutchman was quite plain when the lifting sky came across him.

His heavy breathing had stopped. The only sounds on the quarter-deck were the snoring of the propeller under the counter, the wash of the sea overside, and the dull hum of the engines which came from forward.

Suddenly Engstrom slapped his hands together, making a sharp sound. Then he spoke, in a soft whisper.

"Mr. Denison, are you awake?"

Denison grinned to himself at his momentary belief that Engstrom had come aft with some hostile intent. It was plain enough now that Engstrom had not come with any hidden motive.

Denison gave a sudden start in his hammock, as if this were the first intimation he had that anybody was about. He sat up quickly.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"It is I," said Engstrom, with that preciseness in his way of speaking which frequently cropped up in his talking. "Your friend, Engstrom, has here come."

"Oh, hello!" said Denison. "What's the trouble? Can't you sleep?"

"Ssh!" cautioned Engstrom, grasping the hammock-lashing and holding it steady. "We not waken the others, you know—it will be better. Just private we talk, while the others are sleeping."

"Oh, nobody can hear us in this place," said Denison easily. "No danger of disturbing anybody."

"Please!" pleaded Engstrom. "I wish—for many reasons—that nobody know we are here."

"What does that matter?" asked Denison.

"I do not wish anybody to hear what I have to say," he explained, and turned his head to look behind him again.

"What the dickens is going on!" asked Denison in a whisper. "Have you learned something that's alarming?"

"Nothing particular—and yet we must talk of it," said Engstrom. "It is just that I like to have a little chat with you—all by ourselves."

He was now at the head of the hammock, and he had thrust his face close to Denison, who was sitting up, athwart the hammock, his legs swinging free.

Denison yawned noisily. It seemed silly for Engstrom to come so cautiously, and then be so mysterious.

"I'm pretty sleepy," he announced, and fell back into the hammock, hoping that the hint would be enough for Engstrom.

"I am sorry, but it is necessary that we talk," insisted Engstrom.

"I thought you said you had nothing particular to talk about," replied Denison, sleepily.

"Oh, it is important, my friend—of great importance—to you."

"Fire away then," said Denison. "What is it that you want to say?"

"I want to talk about the Manila police," said Engstrom, and there was something of a chuckle in his voice, as if he had an idea that the subject would be something to hold Denison's attention.

"The Manila police! Well, Mr. Engstrom, to tell you the truth, I don't give a whoop about the Manila police."

"Perhaps I wish to say something about them for which you will give what you call a whoop," went on Engstrom, in his insinuating whisper. "It is something you have never thought of—and I think that before I am done, you will be willing to listen."

Denison pulled himself upright in the hammock.

"Listen! Of course I'll listen. But I think, Mr. Engstrom, that you're mistaken about my interest."

"That may be true, I'll admit," said Engstrom. It was an admission which he made grudgingly, and yet that same hint of a gurgling laugh under the words struck Denison.

"Go on," urged Denison.

"It is very convenient for you to be able to hold against the secret service this frame of mind which you have displayed to me," resumed Engstrom, talking now in the manner of a professor, which he sometimes adopted.

Now all trace of his accent was gone, and he spoke the purest English, except for an occasional idiom that revealed a lack of facility in expressing his thoughts in a language which was not his mother tongue.

"They didn't get me, and that's all I care about," said Denison. "And as I'll probably not ever go back to Manila, I don't bother my head about what happened before we sailed."

"It is good that you do not intend to go back to Manila," said Engstrom. "This makes it simple to tell you what I wish to have you interested in."

"And what's that?" asked Denison.

He rolled out of the hammock now, fumbled for a match and a cigaret in the pocket of his pajama-jacket, and scratched a match. Engstrom's hand flew to the flash of the flame, and closed over it, putting it out by grasping it between his fingers.

"Not the match light," he suggested soothingly. "This is to be private—for what I wish to talk about is a little matter of nearly half a million dollars."

## V

DENISON gasped. "Half a million dollars!" he whispered. "Why, what does this mean? Have you suddenly gone off your head, Engstrom? Or have I gone crazy?"

"Nobody is crazy," said Engstrom, in a soft and reassuring undertone. "It is simply that I want to tell you something which will be of great benefit to you, but before I do so, there are many little things I wish to say. So! Speak carefully, for it is necessary that we do not be disturbed."

"But what has all this to do with the Manila police?" asked Denison.

"You Americans!" exclaimed Engstrom quietly. "You are so—what shall I call it—direct. You wish to come straight to the point. Well, it is only ignorant people who take up important subjects and chew them all together in one mouthful. It is always necessary to proceed—especially in a matter of half a million dollars—a little at a time. I must feel my way with you, for while we are friends and companions of the voyage, we are still strangers."

"Perhaps you are right," said Denison. "Tell it in your own way."

"Let us sit astern of the skylight here, facing to the back. Then we can smoke, and from our cigars no light will be seen by others who may be on the saloon-deck."

He moved under the hammock, turned to one side, and slumped down on the deck with his back to the high coaming of the skylight. Here the starlit sky was visible as the stern rose and fell.

Denison followed him, and sat down beside the Dutchman, with legs straight out before him.

"I was glad to see that the secret officers did not take you today," began Engstrom. "And I was amused to see that it was a great disappointment to them, not to take you out of the steamer."

"That is very kind of you," said Denison.

It was all he could think of that seemed suitable as a reply, for he did not care to press Engstrom as to why he was so pleased that the police had failed to make an arrest.

Engstrom's grinning face peered at him in the momentary light as the deck lifted high. There was a look of infinite knowledge in his expression—a hint that he knew more than Denison realized. In fact, Engstrom's grin was in the nature of a knowing leer. At that moment Denison struck a match, and had a good view of the eyes behind the thick-lensed glasses.

"I know of a few things that other people do not know," went on Engstrom. "And some of them are about you."

He did not utter the final words until the match had gone out, and only the glow on the end of Denison's cigaret marked his position in the gloom.

"About me?" asked Denison. "What could you have heard about me?"

"I shall not say any more in that direction, at present," said Engstrom. "Of course, Captain Goodwin, he has talked a little behind your back."

"Oh, the skipper!" said Denison. "I presume he's had something to say. Well, he couldn't tell you much about me. He had no suspicions about me at all, until he heard that secret service man injure my reputation. Up until then, Goodwin was as nice as pie to me. And as for what he may have said behind my back, you all heard what was said. So he's been leading you to believe that he knows I'm a notorious character, has he?"

"Not the captain, so much," objected Engstrom. "But I have from Mr. Rollais hear—well, a little more."

"Why, Rollais knows nothing about me!" said Denison in amazement. "Do you mean that he dares imply that the police were right about me—that I'm really a criminal?"

"Hush, hush!" counseled Engstrom, laying a hand on Denison's arm. "It is nothing. I know how you feel—it was I, myself, that I was afraid today that the police were coming for. Yes, me. So! There is nothing that we need be—sensitive—about."

He gurgled, and shook Denison's arm.

"You feared the police were coming for you!" breathed Denison. "Why, I don't understand! What should they want you for?"

Engstrom giggled like a girl.

"Like you, I am not friendly with the police. They want me—no matter just what for. I do not know exactly just what particular thing they might want me for at this time. It would be enough, I can tell you that. But I have always slip through their fingers. From Singapore I escape, from Hongkong I escape, from Sydney I escape, also from Manila. Oh, my friend, I understand what it means to always be on the watch against the police. I have had years of it. But like you—I am always too smart for them. They are pig-dog! They have no brains!"

"Do I understand you to be telling me that you are a—criminal?" gasped Denison.

"Call it what you like," retorted Engstrom. "I gather to me the things that I need, as I go. My wits, they are than the police, better. You understand! You are my own kind. Why should I not tell you what I am? Mr. Denison, I look upon you as a brother."

The hand tightened its grip on Denison's arm.

"You certainly must have a lot of confidence in me to tell me this, I'll admit," said Denison.

"The police, they are looking for you, is it not true?" asked Engstrom.

"Well, you saw what happened today," said Denison, with a laugh. "I certainly came near being taken off the steamer—and it would have been awkward enough, as you——"

"I understand it, surely," Engstrom assured him. "So! you are my brother. Our ways are the same. I see how smart you handle the *secretos* today—or yesterday. I like the lofty tone you use to them—the manner of an aristocrat. They cannot do anything at all! You laugh at them. I enjoy this and I say to myself at that minute, 'This man—with me—and we have *anything!*' "

"How do you mean?" insisted Denison.

"That we throw together our fortunes in our travels."

"Oh! You are suggesting that, as two men who make their living by their wits—who, to put it more plainly, take what they want from others—we should be partners?"

"Exactly! You have express it perfectly, my dear Mr. Denison! It would be a great honor to be associated with a man of your fine presence, your good breeding. We are unlike. You are a polished man of the world; myself, I have culture, yes, but I am unfortunate in my appearance. Thus my activity is limited—or rather, my social standing is limited."

"In what way?" asked Denison.

"In my appearance. I must travel as a trader, or as a planter, or a man of business. That compels me to operate only with men of my own stamp—other traders. And they are not so easy picking as the upper classes, as you must know yourself."

"I haven't given much thought to that side of my—profession," said Denison.

"Naturally. You have not given much thought, because you have found no difficulty in mingling with the best people in ships and in hotels—because you can pass yourself off as anything with anybody. It is seen in the case of Rollais—he likes you better than he does me. It is easy for you to get his confidence."

"Oh, yes," agreed Denison. "I have no trouble in making friends—with the better class of persons."

"That is it! Now, you see what I mean. With you as a partner, and traveling only as friends who have met in a steamer, we could work together with ease. You could learn things about the resources of rich men, you could get their confidence—they talk to you about what they do, what they like. Sometimes you do not know me at all, as I move about a ship, or stay at a hotel. You see? You are in society—I am ready to do anything without anybody knowing we are working together. And I am an educated man, if you will bear in mind. I speak four languages, like a native."

It was at least two minutes before he got any reply. Then:

"But I have never worked with a partner," said Denison. "In the first place, I never found anybody that I could trust, who was an educated man like you. So I have always operated alone—you can understand that as a gentleman, I have been limited in the persons I could take in with me."

"Of course!" said Engstrom. "It has been the same way with myself—and being alone makes things difficult."

"You certainly fooled me," said Denison. "I never doubted for an instant that you were an island agent in Sydney—a dealer in island produce, on your way to Lantu-Vanna for business."

"That is the best way I find to talk with planters—to make their acquaintance in ships and hotels. Of course, I know the business—so I can talk with knowledge of the subject. But planters—they have no brains—and do not travel with much money."

"You fooled Rollais, too," said Denison. "He told me that he had heard of you in Sydney—that his father did business with your house, though they had never met you."

"Sure, I fool him!" said Engstrom. "I have the name of a man who is an island agent in Sydney. But his father never did business with that house in Sydney—it is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Because Rollais is not the son of a planter on one of these islands near Lantu-Vannu."

"No? Then what is he? And why should he deceive us?"

Engstrom uttered his chuckling little laugh.

"He is no more son of rich planter than you. When I talk to him a little I discover it. He has never been to Lantu-Vanna before. Our friend, the elegant Mr. Rollais, is sailing under false colors."

"What! You mean to say—why, he seems to be all right!" breathed Denison. "What do you know about him?"

"This: Instead of being the son of a wealthy planter, he is just a messenger from a bank. He is carrying to Lantu-Vanna, for Cumberlee, the head of the big planting company there, a portmanteau. In it is the half a million dollars I have mentioned to you—four hundred thousand dollars is the correct amount, all in Bank of England notes and American gold notes."

Denison caught his breath in an amazed gasp. He was silent for a few minutes. Then his voice came softly, with a pleased drawl.

"I begin to understand, my friend, the reason why you have taken me into your confidence. That is a lot of money. Am I right in thinking—in hoping—that we may share this fortune between us?"

"You have it! I take you into partnership—it will be the first job we have together. And I hand you half this fortune which our Mr. Rollais have in his cabin. We can be rich—if we work together."

"Together! We shall be successful!" and Denison gripped Engstrom's hand in the darkness.

## VI

"NOW," went on Denison, "tell me just how you discovered that Rollais has all this money with him. "If he is a secret messenger——"

"It is simple," said Engstrom. "If it were not true, I should not be in this steamer, going to Lantu-Vanna. In Manila I learn that this money is to be sent—how cash is to go to Cumberlee to pay the concession rights for fifty years for the best island in the group—the Floating Garden, it is called in native style. All right. I have friends who know people in the bank. In such way I am able to lay my plans in advance. They know this money is going secretly—and give me the information."

"Then you are sure of your information?"

"I was sure when I buy a ticket in this steamer. I am surer, now that I have had a chance to listen to Mr. Rollais talk—and tell lies about himself."

"But it sounds absurd! Nobody would be so foolish as to send that much money in cash—much less a bank. And in a tramp-steamer, with a single messenger!"

"That is where the trick is," insisted Engstrom. "It is so silly—yet so easy."

"But the money must be in the ship's safe."

"Ach!" Engstrom exclaimed in disgust. "What good to have in a ship's safe so much money? Maybe the crew take the ship if they know it. Maybe the captain turn pirate. No, they think it is safer just to send it in a bag."

"But why not a check—a draft—anything instead of cash?"

"Because the money have to be paid in cash. It is for a native half-caste son of an old chief. This son own all the island rights. And he is civilized—in Paris he lives. He want nothing but cash—paid down like you or me buy a pair of shoes! I tell you, I know! This money in big notes; it has been accumulated in Manila for months to make this payment. Now it is on board, in the bag of Rollais."

"Then Rollais must be a trusted messenger, I'll say that, to be handed so much money in currency."

"Trusted! Of course he is trusted. I say he is a messenger. But suddenly it come to me yesterday, when we play cards, who he is. He is not a clerk, he is not a hired man of the bank, but he is a rich man's son—he is the son of the banker. He is half-Chinese, half-Spanish, this Rollais. He cannot fool me—he is *mestizo*, not Portuguese, this fellow with his manners and his yellow shoes. He is own the bank with his father, who will leave him ten million dollars when he die. So! Why should this money he has be anything for him to steal?"

"Oh, well then, you know what you're talking about," said Denison. "That settles it—we'll get that cash."

"That is the way to talk!" said Engstrom in delight. "Now we make an easy job of it. There are no other passengers. We take it away easy."

"It would be a shame to let it slip out of our hands," agreed Denison. "This is a stake worth while. We could go to Europe—anywhere—clear out of this country for good."

"Exactly!" said Engstrom. "I speak four language. No more we be bothered by police out here—the lot of swine! We live like gentlemen. Nobody dare speak to us, as today—yesterday—this man talk to you. Such an insult!"

"I felt sure they were going to get me," said Denison. "You see, there was more than that little game of poker with the marked cards that they might know. And it was unfortunate that I had to use the money I won in that game to get away. It would have been serious for me if they had taken me ashore, for there are other charges they might have brought against me. But I was lucky—and what a misfortune if I had missed this chance!"

"For you—of that four hundred thousand dollars—half," said Engstrom. "Just as I promise."

Denison whistled with a hiss of satisfaction.

"That will be a game worth while for me! I'm not very flush with money and I need a good clean-up."

"It is waiting for you—and before we get to Lantu-Vanna, we have it," Engstrom assured him.

"Is it all in that portmanteau which you spoke of?"

"Sure. He have only two pieces of luggage—the portmanteau and a small bag. Well, we play safe. It is the big one we want, but we take both of 'em."

"But if we get it, what then?" asked Denison. "We can't hide a thing like that in a steamer—not very long. And if we're caught with it—or about to be caught—we'll have to throw it overboard. Then we've had all our trouble for nothing. That's the trouble with a big game like this in a steamer—there is no escape if anything goes wrong."

"I know all that. I have think it over, little by little. It will be easy, for when we have the money, there will be no Mr. Rollais to say anything against us."

"How are we going to do away with him?"

Engstrom fumbled for a minute under his jacket, and taking Denison's hand, drew it close. "What is this?" he asked, as he pressed something cold into Denison's palm. It was a steel blade, irregular in shape, sharp on both edges, and hilted in a peculiar fashion.

"It is a Malay kris!" whispered Denison.

"Exactly!" said Engstrom. It seemed to be a favorite word with him. "It is handy, and I am handy with it. If lost in a struggle, it looks, when found, like the work of a native. This steamer is full of Malay sailors, so this is a good weapon for the job. It is quick and silent, especially if Mr. Rollais is killed while he is asleep."

"We will have to lay our plans very carefully," suggested Denison. "It will be easy enough to kill him, but what comes after that will determine the whole business. Only with clever planning can we hope to make a success of it."

"That is easy enough. We shall put our heads together. We have more than three weeks to plan. All that time we shall not let Rollais know that we have any special interests together; it would be fatal to us if he suspect it. We shall lay our plans when he does not know we are together. And, both of us together, we can find a way. I am a good judge of men—and I know you have brains. Even if we have to burn the ship——"

"Burn the ship, in order to conceal what we have done! I suppose that would be the safe thing to do," gasped Denison.

"Oh, I have think it all over," said Engstrom. "It would be safer to destroy—then everybody who could say anything against us would be gone—the captain, the mate, everybody! Some of the crew will get away, yes, so it look like a disaster."

Denison stood up.

"We shouldn't be missing from our cabins too long," he suggested. "We've got to be careful about every move we make from now on."

"Yes, we go back," said Engstrom, rising. "As you say, it be better for us not to be away together too long. And—now you light a cigaret, and we smoke awhile and walk up and down and talk of other things. Then we go back to our cabins, one at a time. I never overlook any small detail in my business; there are no details in a matter of this kind. Everything is important, eh, my friend?"

"Everything is important," agreed Denison. "We must act with the greatest discretion—and from now on not be too friendly."

"You are right. It must not appear that we are too close friends. That is why I have come to you so soon. But you must listen to everything I say to Rollais when we three are together, and I listen to every little thing you say. We must watch every minute, we must study him."

"On the alert every instant," agreed Denison. "And we must watch the captain; we must know all we can of everything that goes on in the ship so as to be able to take advantage and turn things our way."

"Good! Of this, no more now," cautioned Engstrom, as he lighted a cigar.

As he held the match up to his face, his teeth gleamed in the light, and his fingers shook in suppressed excitement over the successful result of his interview with Denison.

They paced the deck for a few minutes from fore to aft, and then went down the ladder to the well-deck. Here they were startled by a figure that moved quickly behind the deck-cargo of jute-bales on the hatch. The figure disappeared into a patch of shadows and escaped to the other side of the bales.

"Now who the dickens is that?" whispered Denison, holding Engstrom back with his hand.

Engstrom did not reply.

"Could that be Rollais—and has he been up on the quarter-deck listening to us while we talked behind the skylight?" asked Denison.

"If so, we kill him now," said Engstrom, as he fished out his kris. "I go round this way, while you——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the next instant the figure reappeared, and lurched toward them with the downward roll of the steamer.

Denison drew back. He had recognized the bent, crouching figure as Mr. John, the mate.

"What you do aft this time?" demanded Mr. John, as he came up all standing, and swayed with the motion of the ship on his limp knees.

"We were just walking around on the quarter-deck to avoid the heat below," said Denison. "Too hot for sleeping in the cabins, you know. And have you any objection?"

"No. All right," said Mr. John, and he turned and crossed the deck, moving swiftly.

He swung himself up the ladder to the saloon-deck with the agility of a gorilla, and disappeared forward.

"I don't like this," said Engstrom.

"No. He ought to be on the bridge, it seems to me, at this hour, though I'm not certain about that."

"Maybe he hear us," suggsted Engstrom.

"I don't think so," said Denison. "I believe he sleeps aft here somewhere."

"Lucky for him I didn't stab him," said Engstrom.

Just then four bells struck forward, and they knew it was two o'clock in the morning.

"Oh, I rather think he just turned out to have a look around and make sure the watch was all on deck," said Denison easily.

"Ve petter go to pet," said Engstrom, who, when the least upset about anything, had a way of turning his b's into p's.

They climbed the ladder and moved forward to the social-hall, then went below. They got to their cabins without making a sound, and, so far as they knew, without being seen.

A little later Engstrom went for a drink of water in the dimly lighted dining-saloon, and on his way back past Dension's cabin, stuck his shoulders in and whispered:

"I see Rollais in his cabin. He is asleep, and snore like a Turk. We are safe about him."

"Good!" whispered Denison, and in the dim light that filtered in from the dining-saloon, he saw Engstrom go out. Presently the young man heard the Dutchman climbing into his berth, and in a few minutes Engstrom was breathing as peacefully as a saint, evidently well-satisfied with having gained a partner who fell in with his plans for murder and theft.

## VII

[illegible] ROLLAIS was late for breakfast in the morning. He had found no trouble, he reported, in sleeping the whole night through. And the card-game was resumed in the social-hall when the three passengers had spent an hour loafing about the decks.

But after tiffin Rollais declared that he was tired of cards and wanted to read a book; also, he said he had some accounts to make up, which he had not finished in Manila. So he wandered away by himself, and soon appeared on the saloon-deck with a correspondence portfolio, and engaged in work with a pencil and paper.

Denison and Engstrom separated. The Dutchman had already advised Denison that they must keep as close a watch as possible on Rollais, for he might attempt to hide his portmanteau in some part of the steamer where it would be difficult to locate until the *Maori Chief* was in Lantu-Vanna, and all their plans would be defeated.

Engstrom settled down with a book in a deck-chair not far from Rollais, while Denison went aft to the quarter-deck and climbed into the hammock. This arrangement was decided upon so that in case Rollais went below, Denison could wander into the dining-saloon through a passage which led from the well-deck. By such method, it was reasoned, Denison could avoid all appearance of following Rollais about.

Rollais kept up his figuring for a couple of hours. Then, with his portfolio under his arm, he wandered aft, and lingering at the ladder which led down to the well-deck, watched behind him to make sure that Engstrom was not following him. Finally, he made his way to the quarter-deck.

"I hope I do not disturb your solitude here," said Rollais with a bow, as he approached the hammock. "This is a pleasant place, but I have no desire to intrude."

"You are perfectly welcome," laughed Denison. "I have no monopoly on any part of the ship and I find it cool here, with a good breeze, with a view of the sea from all sides."

"It is very comfortable, yes—and secluded," said Rollais, as he laid down his portfolio and sat on the coaming of the skylight.

"Shall we invite Mr. Engstrom to come aft and join us?"

Rollais lifted a restraining hand.

"No, no, he is reading—let us not disturb him," he objected.

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Rollais."

"For that matter," went on Rollais quietly, "I doubt that Mr. Engstrom will leave us by ourselves very long."

He rolled his eyes upward to Denison, lazily, the lids drawn down as if there were a covert meaning in the remark which the swarthy young man hoped Denison would understand.

"Oh, he'll probably drift this way, yes," said Denison.

Rollais gave him an inquiring look.

"What is your frank opinion of Mr. Engstrom?" he asked.

"I don't know that I have any special opinion of him."

"You like him? You enjoy his company? You think he is a companion to be—cultivated?"

Dension laughed lightly.

"That is a large order," he evaded.

"But—I might express it this way—you do not feel drawn to him?"

"If I desired to be with Mr. Engstrom," said Denison, "I should not be down here by myself, would I?"

Rollais lifted his lips in an expression of mild amusement, and the horns of his little waxed mustache stood up quiveringly.

"You might say the same thing, Mr. Denison, about being here in relation to my company. It is perhaps that you prefer to be wholly alone?"

"No, no," protested Denison. "You were busy—I knew you wished to be alone. But I am always pleased to be in your company."

"Thank you. But I should like your secret opinion about Mr. Engstrom. A confidence, we shall call it, between us both, and not to be mentioned again. I assure you that I shall not betray this confidence, if you feel that you can give it."

Denison was silent for a few minutes, staring at the awning overhead.

"There must be some reason for asking me about Mr. Engstrom; some reason that is more than mere curiosity."

"I have a very special reason," said Rollais, his face most serious. "But, of course, I can not tell you, until I know what regard you hold for Mr. Engstrom."

"There is no reason why I should have any particular regard for Mr. Engstrom. I have only made his acquaintance on board here—just as I have yours."

"You have not met before?" Rollais kept his eyes on Denison's, and seemed much concerned with what the answer to his question might be.

Denison laughed.

"No, I never set eyes on him before yesterday—and had never heard of him."

Rollais seemed relieved.

"I do not wish to make trouble between friends," he went on. "But if you are not friends, cannot you give me an opinion of what you think of him?"

"Mr. Rollais, you are a very keen observer," said Denison with a smile. "It is apparent that you have seen, as we have all been together, that I did not have any great—admiration, is probably the kindest word—for Mr. Engstrom."

Rollais beamed in triumph.

"It is so!" he exclaimed. "I have noticed your repugnance to the man. Very cleverly it was masked, too—but I observe it, just the same."

"Yes, to be frank, I regard Engstrom as something of an old bore. Pardon me, if I criticize a fellow-passenger, but we all have a right to our likes and dislikes, and as you have already noticed that I do not like him, there is no harm in admitting that I do not find Mr. Engstrom congenial."

"Then you would have no objection to arranging matters so that—how shall I put it—you and me, we shall manage to be together more than we are with Engstrom?"

"That would be an ideal arrangement," said Denison with cordiality. "A man of your taste, your culture, your manners—what pleasant times we could have if this Engstrom were not in the steamer!"

"I am happy to hear you say this, my friend," said Rollais. "Of course, when one sails in such a steamer as this, one can not select his companions, and exclude himself from the company of others. It would not be polite—but Engstrom! He is a common person!"

"Well enough in his way, I suppose," agreed Denison, "but an inferior type of person. But—we must endure him."

"To some extent, yes," said Rollais. "It will not be the part of wisdom to let him see that we do not desire his company. We shall have to be discretion."

"He asks so many questions!" said Denison disgustedly. "And can not take a hint when one shows his company is not wanted. This is the first time I have managed, since we sailed, to get away from him for a few minutes, without actually going into my cabin and shutting the door. And with such heat—it is impossible to shut myself away like that."

"So he asks you questions, too?" inquired Rollais suavely.

Once more that peculiar look was in his eyes which intimated that he could say something more which would be very much to the point.

"Ask!" exclaimed Denison under his breath, as he threw his feet out of the hammock and faced Rollais. "Why, he has done nothing, when you were not with me, but ask questions—about myself, about my business, about you—about everything under the sun, and especially about things which are none of his business!"

Rollais laughed slyly, but the laughter was without mirth.

"So he ask about me, eh? Of course! That is to be expected. And, likewise, he ask me questions about *you*," he confessed.

"About me!" exclaimed Denison in pretended amazement. And, then, in sudden irritation, "What kind of questions did he ask you in reference to me?"

"He ask me if we should not be afraid of you—if we should not consider you a dangerous man."

"A dangerous man! Why should I be dangerous?"

"Because you are a criminal. Pardon me, but those are his words, not mine. Yesterday—the matter of the police, you know."

Denison scowled, and got out of the hammock. He clenched his fists and walked up and down the deck, muttering under his breath, and casting angry glances in the direction of the saloon-deck, where he could see Engstrom stretched out in the deck-chair with his book.

"I hope I have not given you the offense," suggested Rollais in a few minutes. "Please to consider—I only used the words of Mr. Engstrom."

"Oh, it's all right," said Denison. "I appreciate your kindness in telling me this. I presume it is to be expected after what happened yesterday. I am glad to know that Mr. Engstrom is saying this about me. Please tell me more about it—if he said any more."

Rollais flicked the ash from his cigaret with a careless flourish of his hand.

"If I tell you," he suggested, "it only make you furious, and it will do no good to make trouble. It is better not to have trouble between us. Only I desire that you know Mr. Engstrom is not a friend to you, although he pretend that when we are all together playing cards. I do not wish to say any more at this time, but you will do well to be careful of what you say when he is listening."

"The sneak!" said Denison under his breath. "I've a mind to call him aft here, and ask him what he means by discussing me in such a fashion! And tell him, too, that I want him to keep out of my way while I am in this steamer!"

"I would not do that," counselled Rollais. "And I would not let him know in any way that you have knowledge of what he has been saying. It will be three or four weeks until we are at Lantu-Vanna, so let us not be disagreeable."

"But I can't have him talking like that behind my back!" insisted Denison. "It is something which both of you had agreed was not to be mentioned further. Unfortunate, the whole business, but I offered to keep by myself during the trip, after that insult yesterday from the police. And I thought Mr. Engstrom would keep his word in that respect."

"Let it go by," said Rollais. "What Engstrom has say to me, it does not damage you in my eyes. I know you are a gentleman—that is enough."

"Well, as you have told me about it, perhaps it is the fair thing not to make a row about it," said Denison. "I do not want to make a scene and make things disagreeable for you."

"We meet such strange persons on board a steamer like this," went on Rollais philosophically. "Characters from all places, and some of the people not to be trusted. In this respect, I am talking of—Mr. Engstrom."

He turned his slow-moving eyes upon Denison, blinked at him, and smiled knowingly.

"What are you driving at now?" asked Denison.

"There is something hidden about this Mr. Engstrom," said Rollais. "I know I can speak frankly with you, for we are two gentlemen together. I wish to warn you that Engstrom is not to be trusted."

Denison kept a poker-face. At last, what Rollais was leading up to, was about to come out, and Rollais was proceeding as if he had some knowledge of a secret agreement between Denison and Engstrom. It was something now to be handled with extreme caution.

"I have no reason for putting my trust in Engstrom," said Denison. "I hope you do not feel that I am likely to have anything to do with him, other than the casual association which I have had with him from the first."

Rollais shrugged his shoulders.

"You must be careful just the same," he whispered.

"Careful! Why, I have been careful! At any time have you thought I was telling Engstrom something that he should not know? Surely, you must have observed that I was most cautious in saying anything to him about my personal affairs."

"That is true," said Rollais. "You have been discretion. I was glad to see that you did not talk about your affairs."

"It would make no difference, anyway," said Denison. "This Engstrom—I will probably not see him again. And he is only an island agent in business in Sydney. Anything he could learn about my affairs would be of no use to him."

Rollais looked steadily at Denison for a minute.

"Do you believe that he is an island agent at Sydney?" he asked, with a whimsical twist to his lips.

"Isn't he?"

Rollais shook his head.

"I know Sydney very well—and I know the house of Engstrom, in Bridge Street there, which this Engstrom say he is connect with."

"No!" exclaimed Denison, with every show of being astounded.

"He is," said Rollais, "trying to do what you call in your language, drawing the wool over our eyes."

"What? He is not what he claims to be?"

"Not at all is he the Engstrom he pretend to be."

"But do you know who he is?"

"I have my idea on this subject."

"But I heard you tell him that your father had done business with his house in Sydney, so I thought you knew all about him."

"That was just to lay traps for him," said Rollais. "When he is find that I am fooled, he go ahead, and I see that he is telling the lie."

"But why should he take all the trouble he has to mislead both you and me?"

"That is the whole reason I am come and talk to you about this man—and warn you. There is something behind it all. I am mistrustful of him. I hope that we can slowly not have much to do with him."

"I'm afraid we'll find it difficult to keep out of his way unless we frankly let him know that we don't want his company. And you have urged me not to have an open break with him."

Rollais rose and threw his cigaret over the side.

"If Mr. Engstrom talks to you about me, will you tell it to me?" he asked. "You know I have come to you frankly, and told you what he has said about you. May I expect the same back from you?"

"You certainly can!" said Denison heartily. "And I'm thankful to you for making me aware that Engstrom is secretly unfriendly toward me. I rather suspect that Captain Goodwin's gruffness to me is due as much to what Engstrom has been saying as to the insults of the police."

Rollais nodded.

"I believe he has talk to the captain, also, in the same way he has talk to me. But that is all settled. Let us part now as if we had no secret together. For I am sure that as we have talked, Engstrom has been watching while he pretends to be reading. Of course, he will question me on what we have talked about."

"And you'll keep me advised on everything?" asked Denison.

"I shall tell you more, when I am more certain of some things I wish to learn before I mention them," promised Rollais. "I have not told you all—and you will be glad to hear it."

With that he nodded, and went abruptly down the ladder to the well-deck. Denison watched him climb to the saloon-deck, where Engstrom got out of his chair and joined Rollais. They went forward into the social-hall.

## VIII

WHEN, a few minutes later, Engstrom and Rollais appeared again on the saloon-deck and settled themselves in chairs, it struck Denison that this would be a good time to scout around a little in the dining-saloon—in that end of it where the cabins were located.

As Engstrom had Rollais under observation on deck, Denison felt that he would be safe from interruption in case he saw a chance to get into the cabin occupied by Rollais. One thing was necessary—to get into the dining-saloon without going along the saloon-deck and passing through the social-hall; in other words, to have Rollais unaware that Denison was below at all.

The way would be through the passage which led straight from the well-deck, past the galleys, and into the dining-saloon. It was only to be on a chance that things fell right for him when he got inside that Denison decided to do a little investigating on his own account. It mattered little to him whether he actually got into Rollais' cabin—it might not be attempted at all. What Denison did want to find out was, whether Rollais was keeping any special watch on him by any of the cabin stewards.

As it turned out, he had no chance to test things—unless the presence of Captain Goodwin in the dining-saloon was test enough. For as he entered the saloon from the galley-passage, Denison found Captain Goodwin at table, having a late tiffin.

"Hello!" said Goodwin, as Denison emerged from the direction of the pantry. "You seem to be all over the ship."

"I hope I haven't gone where I shouldn't, sir," said Denison with mock humility. "Supposed it was all right to come in this way."

"Oh, it's right enough," said the skipper gruffly and resumed his coffee.

Denison did not go on, but remained, hat off, standing across the table. He wanted to draw Goodwin out—to learn if there was any real hostility toward him, or if the skipper was simply a disagreeable man by nature.

"I'm sorry," went on Denison. "I don't like to break any rules."

"I should think you'd rather be on deck on a warm day like this," said Goodwin.

"I came down from the quarter-deck for some matches," said Denison. "This seemed to be the easiest way, so——"

"You might be better engaged than in prowling about below," snapped Goodwin.

Denison promptly sat down in the swivel chair opposite the captain's place.

"Look here, Captain Goodwin," he began tartly, "I don't like your attitude toward me."

"What do you intend to do about it?" demanded Goodwin.

"That remains to be seen when I get back to Manila. I've paid my fare, and I insist that you treat me as an honest man, until you've reason to suspect otherwise."

He held up a hand as Goodwin was about to make a reply.

"Just a minute! I know the police made slurring remarks about me, but that doesn't give you the right to treat me as if I were a common thief, a criminal, a man being shipped away as a convict."

Captain Goodwin stared at him.

"Why, what have I said?" he asked with assumed innocence. "I only remarked that you might be more comfortable on deck!"

"You referred to my being below here as 'prowling,' and I don't like that word, captain. I think you owe me an apology."

Captain Goodwin coughed, and wiped his mustache with a napkin most carefully before he replied:

"Well, Mr. Denison, you can like it or not, it's all the same to me. I'm not an apologizer—not to the likes of you."

"Very well," said Denison. "I'll take this up in Manila with the owners."

"Take it up where you blasted well please!" retorted Goodwin. "I don't pick my words aboard me to suit people under suspicion by the police. I'm willing enough to admit that I may have used a word that's a trifle broad in its meaning, and it is quite likely that the word fits the case in hand. If you're so blasted sensitive about things, you can stick to your cabin or the open deck. And if you want to make a row in Manila, I'd suggest that you take it up, not only with my owners, but with the police."

Denison got up.

"Very well, sir. I shall do the very thing you suggest—take it up with both owners and police. So you'll hear from this again."

"Suit your own jolly convenience about it, but don't rough me because the police gave you a bad name. I've other passengers aboard to be considered and protected."

"You are now downright insulting," said Denison. "I shall repeat those words to your owners in Manila," and he moved toward the stairway.

He was up a few steps before Goodwin made any reply.

"If you can't remember what I said, I'll repeat it for you," challenged Goodwin.

"Why should you suggest that you have to protect your passengers from me?" asked Denison.

"None of your blasted business, if you want a short and sweet answer," said Goodwin.

And with that the skipper got up and disappeared into the galley-passage where Denison could hear his voice lifted in anger at the Chinese stewards for allowing passengers to "make a blasted promenade of a place not open to passengers."

Denison changed his mind about going up the stairs. He dropped down again, and moved into the forward passage to his cabin. Here he lay down in his berth, and laughed quietly at his encounter with Captain Goodwin.

"The pompous old fool!" he chuckled. "Little he knows what's going on under cover in his old steamer! And how little he knows who his passengers are, or what they're likely to do before he makes Lantu-Vanna as a landfall!"

He heard Goodwin come out of the galley-passage and move toward the stairway, grumbling to himself. At the same time Denison heard feet clattering on the brass plates of the stairway, coming down.

Denison lifted himself on an elbow, so as to be better able to hear anything that might be said between the newcomer and the captain.

"Ah, captain!" came the cautious voice of Rollais. "Could I have a few minutes with you—for a private conversation?"

"Certainly you can," said Goodwin, a note of surprize in his tone.

"Mr. Engstrom is on deck," went on Rollais. "Have you any knowledge of where Mr. Denison is?"

"Denison just went up," said Goodwin. "Didn't you see him in the social-hall, or passing out on deck?"

"I did not see him," said Rollais.

"He just went up."

"He must have gone out on the other side as I came in," said Rollais. "So it is all right—we are alone together. It is not that I am much concerned about anybody, but I do want to ask a favor that you have already granted to Mr. Engstrom and to Mr. Denison. But I should not like them to know, that I, also, have asked the same favor."

"Why," said Goodwin, in hesitation. "I don't know what it can be. But fire away—there's nobody around to hear, and the chinks, even if they come out, won't know what's being said, and they're in the galley washing up after tiffin."

"I must be assured that it will not be told to anybody."

"What's the secret all about, anyhow?" asked Goodwin with a curtness now that indicated he was somewhat annoyed.

"It is a matter of very much importance to me," said Rollais. "Simply, as Mr. Denison has already put his valuables in the ship's safe, I should like the same favor."

"It's news to me that Mr. Denison has put any valuables anywhere," said the captain. "This is the first I've heard of it."

"Maybe I am in error about Mr. Denison, then," said Rollais. "I have no wish to be a nuisance to you, sir, but I understood when I buy my ticket, that as there is no purser aboard, passengers would be entitled to put their valuables in the ship's safe. I was told that at the company's office, when they said I could go by this steamer to Lantu-Vanna. If it had been otherwise, I should not have come by this steamer—not at all."

"Oh, fiddle-de-dee!" exclaimed Goodwin. "Of course you can put anything in the safe that you want to! There's nothing private about that. But when you said that Mr. Denison had put——"

"I was mistaken about that, yes," said Rollais. "It was Mr. Engstrom I meant. I am sure it was Mr. Engstrom, who told me he had already placed his valuables in the ship's safe."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Goodwin. "That pair of men are making sport of you with their talk about having valuables! Why, I wouldn't give a bad sixpence for all the luggage they've got! Denison, with a couple of old bags, and Engstrom with a trunk so small it would serve as a house for a family of fleas! All bally rot!"

"Then, you mean," asked Rollais in surprize, "that neither of the gentlemen has put anything in the safe?"

"I mean just that," said Goodwin. "And I can't be bothered with such mare's nests of yarns by passengers. What are you afraid of, anyway, in my ship? Not but what you're welcome enough to use the safe all you like—stuff it full of gold till it sags the deck if you like. Come on! I'll fix you up! Bring your gear along topside!"

Denison heard the rattle of a bunch of keys.

"I have a large bag—a portmanteau," Rollais went on. "It is this bag which I want to put under protection."

"Bag! Portmanteau!" snorted Captain Goodwin. "Why, what you want is a storeshold! You can't put a bag in a safe, man!"

"No, that was not my intention," said Rollais. "What I really want is a spare cabin—one with a good strong lock to it."

"Oh, a spare cabin! Well, that's more like it! Certainly, you can have a spare cabin. Which one do you want?"

"The one next to my own, if that is convenient to you."

"Of course, you can use that. Just see the steward about it," and Goodwin started up the stairs.

"You are sure that it has a good lock and only one key to it?"

"Take that up with the steward," said Goodwin. "He'll fix you up, keys and all. Tell Chan I told him to see to it."

"I am very grateful to you," said Rollais. "But I hope you will not discuss this request of mine with—other passengers."

"Say, what're you worried about all of a sudden, anyhow?" demanded Goodwin.

"It is of yesterday I think," said Rollais. "You know, sir, since the police came aboard—and talked so strong to Mr. Denison as they did, I have been worried a little. Not that I have with me anything very valuable, but just the same I am worried. I can't afford to lose some of my papers and documents and other things, which would not be of use to any other person, but are of great value to me. In a short way to say it, I do not feel that I can be sure my luggage will not be looked through while I am away from my cabin. You understand? I do not trust this Mr. Denison."

"I don't know that I blame you much on that score," said Captain Goodwin. "He does a lot of prowling about, I notice. You just take that extra cabin for your luggage and say nothing to anybody about it but the chink steward. Then you'll be safe enough. And sleep with the key around your neck. I'm not special taken with some of the passengers aboard this trip, to tell you the truth, Mr. Rollais. So if you don't get just what you want from Chan, let me know."

And the captain went on up the stairs while Rollais again expressed his thanks.

And while Rollais was out in the galley talking to Chan, Denison got out of his cabin and escaped up the stairway without being observed.

## IX

"BY GEORGE, Engstrom, you're right!" whispered Denison. "He's got his cash in his portmanteau, and he's locking the stuff up in a spare cabin!"

The two were at the taffrail, shortly after Denison had heard Rollais discussing the protection of his property by placing it under lock and key. Denison had signaled the Dutchman at once that something was afoot which needed to be taken up by both, so they met where they were free from interruption and observation—at the very stern of the steamer, behind the high saddle-back skylight that stuck up out of the quarter-deck.

"Sure, I am right!" nodded Engstrom, his eyes snapping eagerly behind his thick glasses. "I know that before long he want to put that stuff where it be safe. Ha, ha! We know now where it is to be found!"

Denison told him what had taken place on the stairs.

"But there is one thing I don't like about it," went on Denison. "That is, Rollais is already suspicious of us."

"Let him be suspicious," said Engstrom. "What we care! Just so long as we can get the money. But don't you see what is good about it?"

"No, I don't."

"It is this: He has tell the skipper he has nothing of great value. If he take Goodwin into his confidence—then! We find it hard to get away at Lantu-Vanna with the stuff. When Rollais is dead, the captain is know he had treasure with him, and nobody be allowed to leave the ship without their baggage is looked over. That would be bad for us—but now! The skipper not know about the fortune."

"That's true," admitted Denison. "Another thing—Rollais has come to me—you saw him on the quarter-deck a little while ago and told me to look out for you."

Engstrom lifted his eyebrows.

"So he know, eh! How much he know?"

"That you are not an island agent from Sydney—that you are a dangerous man. He warned me against you."

And Denison laughed silently.

Engstrom also laughed.

"At the same time, Rollais is tell me to look out for you—that you are criminal. And he warn me against you—tell me not to have too much to do with you, and that he be friends with me."

"I wonder if he knows there's anything between us," mused Denison. "All this may be simply to sound us out, and see if he can't throw us off the track."

Engstrom looked at his companion with knowing eyes.

"We fool him, all right. He is afraid of both of us, but he do not like to let us know it. So he make friends with both of us, and then try to split us apart. That is for his own safety—to keep us from combining against him, just like we have."

"Looks like it," admitted Denison. "He knows I'm a crook, and he knows you are not what you pretend to be, so you must be a crook, too. He was particularly careful to ask me if we had ever met before."

"Ah!" said Engstrom. "He is afraid that we only pretend to be strangers when we come aboard. So! You see! From the first he was suspicious of us. So I fooled him first—I said things against you, just to throw him off the track."

"But why did he fish Captain Goodwin to find out if we had put anything in the safe? There was something behind that, I'm sure."

"Easy!" declared Engstrom. "He want, not the safe, but the room next to his. And he did not want to make the captain think there was only one passenger who had valuables, so he tell the captain both of us have already put our stuff away. That make it easier to bring up the subject; also, Rollais prove to himself we have not got very much money ourselves. Of course, he have nothing valuable! No! Just a bag stuffed with money. It is nothing! But he want a room just close to him, with a good lock and key!"

And Engstrom chuckled over the joke of the thing.

"We'll have to begin to plan before long on what we're to do," said Denison. "How we're to get the money—how we're to get away with it."

"First, we kill Rollais. That fathead of a Goodwin know nothing about the bag of cash——"

"I'm not so sure of that," objected Denison. "We can't very well loot that spare cabin after Rollais is dead. We've got to feel our way carefully, and have all our plans laid in advance. We can't make a false move in any direction, until we have prepared the way for what is to come after. Step by step we'll have to go—and not strike too soon before Lantu-Vanna."

"You are wrong," said Engstrom. "Rollais must be killed as soon as possible. If we wait until the night before we are in Lantu-Vanna, then the body be kept—everything be in excitement on the steamer just as we come into port. That will be bad for all of us."

"Yes," said Denison. "I see that. But—I am against doing anything in a rush. Better take the time to plan things, than to pull off a murder, and then try to straighten things out."

"Probably you never have to kill a man in a steamer, this way, before?" asked Engstrom.

"No—not exactly under such circumstances. But you ought to understand that the minute there is a crime aboard, I'll be the man under the guns—the logical man to turn to if there is a murder. Captain Goodwin has an awful crab on me as it is, and at the first chance, he'll be glad for an excuse to clap me in irons and hold me for the authorities at Lantu-Vanna."

"That is all settled in my mind," said Engstrom carelessly. "I know it all and I have worked it out, what you are to do in the case."

"I must be absolutely protected," insisted Denison.

"Sure, you be protected. You will be somewhere all the time while the murder is done, so that Captain Goodwin can have no suspicion, even if he want it, that you kill Rollais. You must have a perfect alibi—you must be with Goodwin, even if you are in a row with him at the time Rollais is killed."

"How can that be arranged? It is a matter not under our control, for we cannot tell at what minute Rollais' body will be discovered."

"Hah!" breathed Engstrom. "I kill him and I discover he has been murdered. So! I shall make a big rumpus, and I shall report that I see a Malay running away from the cabin of Rollais. Ah, my friend, I know what I am doing when I start on a job of this kind."

"I'll grant that you seem to have a perfect technique so far," said Denison. "But—what then?"

"Before that, I have something to make Rollais sleep so he not hear anything. You say he will wear the key of the spare cabin on his throat—well. When I make him sleep harder than is natural I get the key—I get the portmanteau and take from it the cash. I leave the portmanteau behind, locked up again, I put the key back on the throat of Rollais. At that time I stab him. I leave the kris. I say nothing then. Before long I call for Rollais, but he not answer. I call to Chan, and he come. I tell Chan to ask Mr. Rollais to come to me and just then I go myself to the cabin of Rollais. I find him killed, and Chan is with me. Then I say to Chan I see a Malay run out a few minutes ago from the passage of the dead man's cabin. Of course, the watch, the money Rollais have in his pocket—everything—not be touched. Then I say that because I was calling for Mr. Rollais, I frighten off the Malay who have kill him. There is great excitement—you are with the captain all this time about something—perhaps you are go to find fault because a Malay sailor has been down in the dining-saloon, running around among the cabins. In that way you be protected. Goodwin cannot have any suspicion of you."

Denison considered the matter.

"But how do we get the money out of the steamer? What if there is a search? What if our baggage is gone through?"

"Why should they go through our baggage? Mr. Rollais have not been robbed. He told the captain he had nothing of great value in his portmanteau and everything be found in it, so far as Goodwin can tell. There are other things with the money, of course. And the money will be split up between us."

Denison shook his head doubtfully.

"You never know what the police are likely to do in such a case. We may be compelled to show everything we have in the way of money, and that will be an awful lot to be carrying in our pockets or bags. Besides, we have made a vital mistake from the first."

"What is that?" asked Engstrom anxiously.

"We have not put anything in the safe, and a couple of business men like us would hardly carry a quarter of a million dollars without taking precautions to have it in safe-keeping on board this steamer."

Engstrom leaned back against the rail and laughed heartily.

"Good! I try you out, and you are smart! My friend, I have already tell Captain Goodwin I want to put something in the safe, that I have a lot of cash with me for buying island products, and that I am worried because you are on board."

Denison stared at him.

"The dickens you have! Now I see why Captain Goodwin has been so cross with me!"

"Exactly!" said Engstrom. "Don't you understand? I have do that so the captain not have the slightest idea you and I are working together against Rollais. It makes it safe for you when the murder is done, and easy to go off the ship with the money."

"Safe for you, yes," admitted Denison ruefully. "But I may be held——"

"I did not damage you with Captain Goodwin any more than you have been damaged by the police, my friend. What you do not know is that Goodwin called Rollais and myself to his cabin the first day after we sailed, and told us to look out—just before dinner the first night it was."

"He did, eh? Well, that doesn't matter now. What I'm wondering about, is if you will take ashore all of Rollais' money just because you have told the captain you want to put cash in the safe. If you do—then I'll get my share in Lantu-Vanna?"

"You will have your share before there is any discovery of the murder," broke in Engstrom. "You go and tell the captain that you, too, want to put money in the safe. All right, once you have put it in—any big package will do—you ask him later to take some out because you have lost money at cards with us. But—that is the time you will put the money of Rollais—your share—in the safe. And that will be before there is any murder.

Denison opened his eyes in sudden comprehension.

"Oh, that's it! Before you kill Rollais, we will already have his money in the safe as our own!"

"Exactly!" agreed Engstrom, grinning.

"So, nobody can say there was any robbery of Rollais. If we was to put money in the safe *after* the murder—that would be childish, stupid, not a thing for men of brains to do. But after the murder, we will not ask to go into the safe on any account, until we are ready to go ashore in Lantu-Vanna. So! We have established in advance of the murder that we have lots of money in the safe, and even if the police search us, or question us, we can show that it was several days before the murder that we put our valuables away. As Rollais has nothing in the safe, and he has already told the captain it is only papers and some small things of no great value he want to lock up in the safe, the captain cannot say to the police that we have taken our cash from Rollais."

"That is capital planning," said Denison, with a touch on Engstrom's arm that was complimentary. "Then I shall see Goodwin at once, and put in the safe several large packets of paper."

"That is the next step," agreed Engstrom. "And now we have been here long enough. Let us get out."

"One thing more," said Denison. "Promise me that every move you make, you will let me know in advance—that you will not act without first consulting me, and we have agreed on everything. It will be very dangerous for me if anything happens for which I am not prepared."

"Oh, positively, I shall do nothing before you know it," promised Engstrom.

And, with a look of caution, he wandered away and left Denison alone. They kept apart during the balance of the afternoon, though they never lost sight of Rollais for more than a few minutes at a time.

## X

DENISON called on Captain Goodwin that afternoon, in the skipper's cabin.

"I should like to see about putting the cash I am carrying, in the ship's safe," said Denison.

Captain Goodwin blinked at him.

"Another one!" he exclaimed. "I seem to have a parcel of blooming millionaires aboard me!"

"How's that?" asked Denison innocently. He held in his hand several packages, tied up with string, all of them being about the sizes of packets of banknotes.

Goodwin shook his head.

"All of a sudden the three of you have broken out in a demand for strong-vault service. Anybody would think I had a lot of fugitive bank-tellers, or men who are retiring from active business after having made a fortune in trade—and all bound for Lantu-Vanna!"

"Am I to understand that the others have also asked to put money in the safe?" asked Denison.

"Something like that," said Goodwin, observing that Denison was suddenly wary—or wanted information which he had no business to ask.

Goodwin saw that he had made a mistake. But, at the same time, Denison noted that the captain's manner was more cordial than it had been, the captain being evidently impressed by the fact that Denison had considerable money.

"Then I don't believe I want to put mine where all this wealth of the others is going," said Denison.

He saw at once that he might walk into a trap—his packets were only paper cut into banknote sizes, and it crossed his mind that as Goodwin was beginning to show curiosity about what his passengers were stowing away in the safe, the packets might be examined secretly by the skipper.

"Why not?" asked Goodwin, afraid now that he might have made a mistake from the first about Denison.

"Well, if everybody's putting so much money into the safe, I'd rather not risk mine there. It might be robbed, you know. And, to tell you the truth, I've got rather a large amount."

Goodwin whistled and sat up in his chair.

"I say, look here, Mr. Denison! You three passengers play cards and chat about the ship like three brothers out on a holiday, yet you all seem to be suspicious about the others."

"What you mean, sir, is that everybody is suspicious of me. Oh, I know—both Mr. Engstrom and Mr. Rollais have discussed me to you—and you have warned them against me. It's only natural. I don't blame anybody. But I've got to look out for one thing."

"What's that?"

"That somebody isn't robbed in this steamer—and then claim that my own money was taken away from them. I've got to protect myself."

"Nobody has been robbed yet," said Goodwin.

"Good! That's exactly why I'm here to put this money in the safe. It's mine now, and I want to make sure nobody raises a howl and has me searched, and claims what's my own."

Goodwin scratched his head, wiped his glasses, and turned red.

"Rather smart, I'll say, on your part. I see your point and you're quite right about it."

"Then you'll understand that if I put this money in the safe, I don't want the others to know anything about it."

"Quite so, quite so!" agreed the skipper.

"You just told me that all the passengers had suddenly asked to have use of the safe—that was a trifle indiscreet, captain."

Goodwin fidgeted.

"I—I was only joking."

"This is nothing to joke about so far as I am concerned. If I use the safe I must have your promise that you will keep it a secret."

"Oh, certainly—by all means!" said Goodwin.

"And one other thing. I must be assured that my cash is not tampered with. I do not want the packages broken open by any—er—rough handling, or error. I shall expect to have a wax seal on each knot."

Goodwin stared at him in surprize.

"Do you mean to imply, sir, that I would——"

"Let's not go into that too deeply," said

Denison. "You've been a bit hasty with me and we've had words. I am dealing with you now in your official capacity as master of this vessel. Have you sealing-wax and a piece of candle?"

Goodwin turned and raided several drawers in his little bulkhead desk.

"Here you are!" he said shortly, and handed over the red stick, and lighted the candle himself. "I trust, Mr. Denison, that the little unpleasantness which has passed between us can be remedied. I—I offer you an apology for what I said in the dining-saloon."

Denison, melting the wax, nodded his head.

"It's all right," he agreed. "We'll let it go at that."

"And you won't—see my owners?"

"No," said Denison, as he pressed his ring down on the hot wax he had smeared over the knot in the string of the first packet. "Let's not bother about that any more, captain."

"That's very kind of you, sir," said Goodwin. "And perhaps—I could say a word to the other passengers—to the effect that what I've said against you, may not be—ah—that is—accurate."

"It would be much better if you would avoid the subject," said Denison. "I don't care what they think of me. I try to be agreeable and friendly, and let it go at that. I'm well aware that both Engstrom and Rollais are suspicious of me. I'm not the man to take the trouble of correcting their impressions or opinions. Outwardly, they are both agreeable and I trust that they will remain so until we reach Lantu-Vanna. After that, I don't expect to see them again."

"Well, just as you say," said Goodwin, and he fished out a great bunch of keys, and unlocked the safe, which was built into the bulkhead of the foot of his berth.

He selected a tin compartment which was removable and drew it out.

"Here you are. I've lost the small key that goes with this box, but as you're sealing your packets, that won't matter. I think what you have will go nicely into this."

"Oh, yes," said Denison. "Twenty-dollar notes just fit! You see, outside of British notes, most of my cash is in twenty-dollar American gold notes—the same sort of money I bought my ticket with."

"Which fact," said Goodwin, "simply infuriated that police officer when he came aboard. If he had searched your luggage, it would have been bad for you, eh?"

Denison laughed.

"I rather think he'd have changed his mind about me. Still, I wasn't anxious to have my money dragged into the light. It's dangerous enough to carry the amount of money I have with me without having the fact advertised."

"I'd say, rather not!" agreed the skipper, as his eyes wandered over the packets. "Tidy sum, I take it, and I'm glad you've decided to put it where it'll be secure, Mr. Denison."

In a few minutes Denison had finished his task, and saw his packets locked up in the safe. With a word of thanks, he left the cabin.

## XI

THREE days slipped away aboard the *Maori Chief* before anything happened which altered the situation for the three passengers. At intervals Rollais played cards with Engstrom and Denison, and chatted on deck with them. The friendly relations, at least on the surface, were maintained just as if there had been nothing out of the ordinary run of things among three men bound for the same port.

Captain Goodwin kept up a semblance of casual politeness with all of them, but he did not find that difficult, for he only encountered them at dinner-time. His other meals he took in his cabin, and spent most of his time on the bridge in the routine of the steamer's day's work.

Engstrom and Denison kept as close watch on Rollais as was consistent with safety for their plans. They found that Rollais did not keep an especially close watch on the spare cabin where his portmanteau was kept under lock and key. Only in one way did he show his caution in respect to his luggage—that was when the Chinese steward was making up the berth in the cabin occupied by Rollais. At such times the young man always managed to be near at hand, in the dining-saloon, or in the passage that led to his cabin. At other times he was rambling the decks, or in the social-hall with Engstrom and Denison.

Rollais had become a trifle distant with Engstrom; yet he kept this coldness within control so that the Dutchman could find no fault. Engstrom, of course, took pains to conceal the fact that there was any coolness, for it was necessary to keep up cordial relations with his intended victim.

All this time, Denison was aware that Rollais was studying him covertly. And Rollais took every occasion to show Denison that his company was enjoyed, that he was trusted and liked. These little signs of friendliness were revealed to Denison in various ways—agreements in the trifling arguments that will generate among three men when thrown close together in a ship, a certain deference to the opinions or desires expressed by Denison, or a way of always having a match when Denison needed one. Rollais did not trouble himself to show an equal consideration for Engstrom.

Denison met Rollais in the same spirit, careful to hold the young man's confidence. It was a decided asset to Denison, this trust and confidence of Rollais, and Engstrom's shrewd eyes showed approval when Denison did or said something which pleased Rollais.

Thus the game of intrigue went on while the steamer plowed through smooth seas for Lantu-Vanna — and tragedy. But neither Engstrom nor Denison, for all their shrewdness and keen observation of Rollais, had the slightest idea of the way things were going to turn out. Although they felt perfectly sure that they had gaged Rollais accurately, they were totally unaware of the fact that all this time he was maneuvering for position with tactics that were as shrewd as their own, and strategy that was far beyond their own.

The time came when they got an inkling of the craftiness which Rollais could employ against them—but only an inkling, as it turned out. The full measure of the *finesse* with which the young dandy could play his hand did not come until later.

It was at the third dinner following the day when Denison had put into the ship's safe his packets of waste paper, it came to Engstrom and Denison that Rollais was up to something which they could not fathom. So they laid a trap.

Captain Goodwin and Rollais always managed to remain at the table longer than Denison and Engstrom. This was accomplished by luring Engstrom and Denison out of the dining-saloon on the false impression that Rollais was leaving; then the young man went back. To follow him would only reveal the fact that they did not want him to be alone with the captain.

At first the scheme seemed to be only an accident. But the second time it happened Engstrom and Denison saw that there must be agreement on the method—that Captain Goodwin was a party to the deception.

The plan was this: Rollais was the first to leave the table. Engstrom and Denison would get up also. Then, part way up the stairs to the social-hall, Rollais would stop, and remembering something more he wished to say to the captain, would call back something to the captain, and they would carry on a conversation across the length of the saloon. As this conversation was always on a topic in which neither Engstrom nor Denison had had a hand, they had to, for appearances, proceed out on deck. Otherwise, their listening would not only be bad manners, but would be downright suspicious.

When Denison and Engstrom were well out of the way, Rollais would drift back to the table and he and Goodwin would talk for an hour or more—and in low tones. Once they were by themselves they seemed to have a subject which required great privacy. It was not a situation to give Engstrom and Denison any special peace of mind.

"You see," Denison told Engstrom, "if Rollais wanted to have a secret conference with Goodwin, it could be done by going straight to the captain's cabin. But that would make it plain that they were cooking up something together. This way, with us shoved out on deck, they try to make it look as if the business between them was just casual."

"And I notice," said Engstrom sadly, "that never they ask us to come back! And always they make it happen by accident. When he get up, Rollais know well he is coming back."

"Sure!" agreed Denison. "And we can't stick on tomorrow night, when Rollais leaves. That will show at once that we have an idea something is going on under cover, and they won't keep it up if we stay. Rollais will simply not come back to the table at all if he finds we stick there."

They put their heads together, and were ready for the third evening.

When Rollais left the table after dinner, and was half-way up the stairs according to custom, Engstrom went on deck alone, returned almost immediately to the dining-saloon, and went to his cabin. With the door open, he was out of sight of the table, yet could hear ordinary conversation.

Denison then went on deck, passing Rollais on the stairs, where the young man was carrying on the long-range conversation across the saloon. And Denison went aft at once to the quarter-deck, where he stationed himself so he could watch the after bulkhead of the saloon—that same door and passage which he himself had entered only to meet with a reprimand from Captain Goodwin for "prowling." They wanted to make sure that Rollais had no way of quitting the saloon without his departure being noted.

Denison and Engstrom had little hope that their plan would reveal to them what it was that Goodwin and Rollais were talking about; they did, however, hope that the private chats would be broken up. It did not seem possible that the captain and Rollais would discuss anything while there was the slightest chance of being overheard by Engstrom. And Captain Goodwin and Rollais could find no fault with the arrangement, for it had the appearance of being thoroughly legitimate and not a trap.

What they did want to determine was whether or not, being defeated in their scheme of holding private conferences in the saloon, Goodwin and Rollais would seek the seclusion of the captain's cabin. In that case Engstrom and Denison would have good evidence that there was something really serious afoot which might interfere with the plan to dispose of Rollais and take his treasure.

As Denison loafed in the cover of the awning, the moon was well up, bathing the steamer in its brilliance, and making the shadows all the deeper. The awning made the quarter-deck a black pit, speckled round the edges with the filigree of light that filtered straight down through the lacings of the canvas and spilled over the deck in irregular flashes when the steamer heeled and lifted gently to the lazy swells.

He had scarcely climbed into the hammock and propped himself up so that he could see down into the well-deck and so watch that door in the bulkhead, when he saw a figure come through the galley-passage—the very passage which had been denied to Denison by orders of the captain.

"Rollais seems to be able to walk around where he likes, but I'm told by Goodwin to keep out of there," Denison told himself. "And Goodwin must have seen Rollais come in this direction, by that passage."

There was no doubt whatever that the figure was Rollais—all in white, tall and slender, and moving with that certain grace which was characteristic of him. He did not dally in the well-deck, but proceeded straight aft, disappeared for an instant under the break of the deck, and then popped up the ladder. When his head and shoulders were in sight, he paused, as if reluctant to go on.

Denison said nothing, preferring to let his visitor open the business he might have in hand. So Rollais, as if waiting to make sure that the hammock was occupied, climbed to the deck and stood silent. He was carrying a little swagger-stick of a cane—a cane which suggested a rapier encased by wood. Denison was certain that it was really a sword-cane, that secret weapon which can be so effective when used without warning.

"Are you there, Mr. Denison?" asked Rollais in silky tones.

It was plain to Denison that the visitor desired to be most quiet and secretive about being on the quarter-deck.

"Oh, hello!" said Denison softly, moving in the hammock so as to imply that he had not been aware of anybody about. "Who's that? Oh, Mr. Rollais—yes, yes—come on. But where is Mr. Engstrom?"

"In his cabin," said Rollais softly, moving under the awning. "But it is necessary that we be alone."

## XII

"THAT fool of an Engstrom is always on my heels," went on Rollais, as he drew nearer the hammock. "Never do I go anywhere, but that swine is grinning over my shoulder, or around the corner, or popping up from somewhere that he should not be."

The young man advanced into the gloom under the awning, and was presently visible to Denison as a figure outlined against the moonlit sky when it lifted overside.

"Do you mean to say that Engstrom is purposely trailing after you—watching you?" asked Denison in pretended surprize.

"Always he is watching me," said Rollais, openly showing his irritation. "Tonight—

just now—I wanted to talk a little longer with Captain Goodwin, but that smarty of an Engstrom—what does he do? He goes back to his cabin! Pest! What can I do then?"

"Oh, that was probably just something that happened naturally, and he did not think it would annoy you," said Denison.

"Ah, you are wrong, my friend!" insisted Rollais, now coming to a stop close to the hammock. "He has purpose behind what he do!"

"But if you talked with Captain Goodwin in low tones or whispers, Engstrom could not hear you. He would be too far away, up in that forward passage."

"Yes, we want to talk whispers. But, first, we send the steward that way to move about in the passage on some pretext which the captain suggested. And what does the steward see? It is Engstrom, with his door open, and sitting on the little lounge just inside the door. He was with his face to the edge of the open door, and what do he have in his hand? A fan!"

Denison laughed, sincerely amused now.

"A fan! Why, I don't see anything dangerous in a fan."

"No! All right. But this fan—it is held behind his head in such way, that it help him to catch every word we say! But Chan is not fooled—he tell us what it all mean. I tell to you, that Engstrom is a nuisance to me!"

"But why should Engstrom want to follow you about and listen to what you have to say to Captain Goodwin?" asked Denison.

"I have my idea on that, but I am not sure the time is ready yet to tell you," said Rollais.

"Then you think you'll want to tell me later, my friend?"

"I think I shall when I feel the time is come, and we are perhaps better acquainted," replied Rollais, and then fell silent for a few minutes, as if considering how he should bring up the mysterious subject.

Presently he turned his back to the well-deck and lighted a cigaret. In the flash of the match, Denison saw that there was a worried look about the young man's eyes—worry or strain incident to trying to decide what stand to take about letting Denison into a secret.

Denison did not press him to talk, thinking it wiser not to show any special interest. If Rollais felt that his companion did not have anything very important to say, Denison reasoned that Rollais would take the lead himself—and Denison wanted the fullest confidence when Rollais did decide to talk.

"So," resumed Rollais, when his cigaret was going, "when Captain Goodwin understood that Engstrom was spying upon us, the captain had the idea that it would be a good joke to fool Engstrom by letting me slip through the passage to the galley and come here, instead of going up the stairway. Thus Engstrom has no knowledge that I have left the saloon."

He laughed a little in appreciation of the captain's cleverness.

"But Engstrom will know that you are no longer talking with the captain," suggested Denison. "If Engstrom is as smart as you say, I am afraid that he has not been misled."

Denison framed his sentence in such way that Rollais would feel that here was a man who was taking sides with him—a man worthy of a more complete confidence

Rollais laughed discreetly, and slapped his leg.

"That is where the joke is," he declared. "I had been talking almost in whispers with the captain, but the captain was talking back to me in his regular voice and now he is going on with it, while I am away, just as if I still remained at the table. So that fool Engstrom, who think he is so clever, believes this minute that I am still talking with the captain—and hearing what the captain is saying."

Denison burst out laughing. Rollais remained standing nearby, swaying with the motion of the steamer. He joined in the laughter with proper caution. He seemed suddenly relieved that Denison had such a hearty appreciation of the joke on Engstrom.

"He *is* a fool!" said Denison. "But you are too much for him! I hope you will continue to fool him, Rollais."

"You will help, also?" asked Rollais.

"Of course! Call on me any time you have a little game like that!"

"Thank you," said Rollais. "I was sure, after what I said to you a few days back, that you can be trusted."

"Then you and Captain Goodwin, of course, have been much annoyed—for you really wish to talk privately?" suggested Denison. Now he felt that he would be let into the secret.

"That is another part of the joke," said Rollais. "For Captain Goodwin and myself—we have absolutely nothing private to talk about."

Immediately Denison was suspicious that he was being misled for a purpose. He felt that in spite of the apparent frankness of Rollais, it was all engineered for the sole aim of testing whether the third passenger would make an effort to find out what Captain Goodwin and Rollais were talking about. It looked now to Denison as if he himself had walked into a trap by probing adroitly for the subject under discussion by Rollais and Goodwin. Once more Denison fell back on the subterfuge of carelessness, and attempted to show that he had not the slightest interest in the private conferences that had been going on at the table.

"Then, if you had nothing private to talk over with Captain Goodwin, it does not really matter at all what Engstrom did."

And there was a tone of finality in the words, as if now the whole thing could be dismissed.

"But it does matter very much," insisted Rollais earnestly. "I have told you that Goodwin and myself had nothing to discuss of a private nature. This is true. But it was a trick we played on Engstrom. I reported to Captain Goodwin that this man Engstrom was altogether too curious about where I happened to be at certain times. It seemed to me that no matter where I went around this steamer, no matter who I talked with, this Engstrom, —— him, was always listening or peeping through a porthole, or stumbling into me wherever I went. I feel like a man with a dog at my heels, I tell Goodwin. Perhaps you, too, notice that, eh?"

"It's an entirely new idea to me," declared Denison. "I hadn't the slightest thought that Engstrom was annoying you in that way."

"Of course not," went on Rollais. "Perhaps you did not observe. But you would not, probably because the only time when Engstrom does not annoy me by following and listening, is when I am talking with you."

Denison pricked up his ears at that and held his breath for an instant. There was something in Rollais' tone as he spoke which indicated a suspicion that there was good reason why Engstrom did not pry upon Rollais when he was with Denison—and that Denison knew the reason for that immunity. That innocent-sounding statement, stripped of its indignation as Rollais uttered it, might well be a subtle challenge or accusation, Denison reasoned—and it might well be a covert way of hinting that Rollais was well aware of a secret agreement between Engstrom and Denison.

"Why, what you just said has a queer meaning," said Denison soberly. "If Engstrom follows you, and tries to overhear what you are saying when you are alone or with the captain, why shouldn't Engstrom do the same when you are with me?"

"I find the answer to your question easy enough to my mind," said Rollais. "It is because when Engstrom knows I am with you, Engstrom is safe."

"Safe! What the dickens do you mean by that? Aren't you safe anywhere in this ship? And with anybody else?"

"Not wholly," said Rollais. "I am ——"

He checked himself as if he had thought better of going into the matter fully.

"Not wholly!" repeated Denison. "Man alive! What does this mean, anyway! There is no good in being so mysterious! If you have told me this much, you must go ahead and tell me all of it. Otherwise—well, we are both wasting our time and our breath. Either tell me, my friend, or say nothing more. I do not want to be confused—and frightened—by such talk! It makes me nervous, and I shall not be able to sleep at night."

"Yes, I must take up this thing with you fully I see," said Rollais. "But I am reluctant to tell it all, until I am sure that you will stand with me in the plan I have made."

"You mean that you are afraid, for some reason, of this man Engstrom?"

"No, it is not that I am afraid of him. I am afraid of nobody."

"Then what is this plan? And in what way do you want me to be of assistance to you?"

"It is that Engstrom is afraid of you."

"Afraid of me! Why, he has never shown the slightest sign of being afraid of me!"

"Ah, but he is secretly. He knows that you are a very keen man, that you have an understanding of little things that come up in cards, and that you would see at once that he was following me if he kept up his following when I am with you. He does not wish to have you suspicious of him."

"Well, I don't know what to say to that," said Denison. "It looks queer to me. Perhaps I would notice that Engstrom was always watching you. But now—he has not followed you here. Is that because Engstrom fears I am suspicious of him?"

Rollais gave a little laugh that was like the purring of a cat—a fluttering in his throat that was so animal-like that Denison felt his hair rise in a sudden sensing of menace.

"It is not so much that you might be suspicious of Engstrom," said Rollais. "It is that Engstrom is already suspicious of you—and very much afraid of you."

"He is! And why should he be afraid of me?"

"He is afraid of both of us. In the first place, he knows that you are a man hunted by the police, and ——"

"Oh, ho!" breathed Denison. "But what of that? You all know that—or at least you all heard what the detective said to me. It was an insult—an outrage, and ——"

Rollais checked him with a hissing sound and a sudden movement of the luminous end of his cigaret.

"It is not necessary to go on like that," he said calmly. "And we must be quiet. It is not a matter to be upset about—with me."

"But Engstrom appears to be upset about it," insisted Denison. "Not that I care. But why should he worry himself about me? Is he afraid that I intend to pick his pocket, or cheat him at cards?"

He laughed openly.

"You do not understand yet, my friend," said Rollais in a voice that did not carry more than two feet. "This whole thing is the result of something you have no knowledge of—something that Mr. Engstrom has kept secret from everybody in this steamer. Only I know of it, except Mr. Engstrom—and he think it is a secret."

"All right," said Denison. "Go on. What is it? Or do you intend to take me into the secret?"

"You are just the man to tell it to," whispered Rollais, his lips close to Denison's head. "It is that Mr. Engstrom has with him a fortune—and pretends to be only a small business man."

"A fortune!" gasped Denison. "That man—you say he has a fortune with him! Impossible!"

"Not impossible at all," continued Rollais. "In the big black bag which is under his berth in his cabin, he has four hundred thousand dollars in Bank of England notes and American twenty-dollar gold notes."

## XIII

DENISON fell back into his hammock. He was wholly unprepared for the revelation—or the lie—which Rollais had just expressed. And as Denison lay there staring up at the blackness of the awning, he smiled to himself. for now he felt sure he understood the subtlety of Rollais.

And Rollais remained silent for several minutes, apparently waiting for Denison to say something that would reveal his reaction to the information he had just been given.

"Four hundred thousand dollars!" said Denison. "That's interesting, but I fail to see what it has to do with us, if this man carries a fortune about with him in a bag."

"Then you admit, at least, that you are interested in this matter?" asked Rollais.

"Certainly I am interested. Who wouldn't be? But it never struck me that Engstrom was a wealthy man."

"He is not wealthy," replied Rollais.

"Not wealthy! When you have just told me that he has a fortune with him! Why, he must have millions, if he carries that much in cash about with him—in his luggage—just as you or I would carry our supply of shirts!"

"You do not understand," persisted Rollais gently. "There is something more ——"

"But what is there to understand?" broke in Denison, seeing that by pretending stupidity he could draw Rollais out. "I'll admit that I'd expect a man to have so much money in the form of a check or a draft—and even that, he'd put in the ship's safe. But here you say he has it in a bag—thrown around in his cabin. Really, it all sounds preposterous to me. I doubt there is any truth in it."

"Do you think I have made up the story?" asked Rollais, a trace of pique in his voice, his dignity ruffled that his veracity should be in question.

"No, that's not it. I don't doubt that you're telling me what you believe to be true."

"I know it is true, Mr. Denison."

"How do you know it? How can you be sure?"

"I make it my business to find things out."

"Surely, you haven't been able to look through Mr. Engstrom's luggage? To go into his room and open his bag and count the cash?"

"No, I have not done that," admitted Rollais. "But I know about it in Manila before I come on board this steamer."

"Oh, well, that's different. If you have absolute knowledge, and you are talking from facts in your possession. As you have told me so much, perhaps you will tell me how you got the information."

"For one thing," said Rollais, 'the reason the police were so careful to look the passengers over in this steamer, was because Mr. Engstrom was carrying the money. The police wish to protect him."

"How could they protect him by looking the passengers over?"

"To make sure there were no crooks on board. Well, Mr. Denison, and I hope you will pardon me if I speak frankly, they knew you were a suspicious character so they made a point of letting Engstrom and Captain Goodwin know they should be careful."

"Then Captain Goodwin knows about the cash?"

"No. But the police felt you would not dare rob Engstrom after what they said to you."

"Oh, I see," said Denison. "But is that all the proof you have that Engstrom has this fortune with him?"

"I know other ways: let them pass for the moment. Now! You see that Engstrom is suspicious of you, and he is also suspicious of me. He believes that both of us are in this steamer to rob him of his fortune. That is why he watches me, but he does not dare watch both of us when we are together. You can see for yourself he probably knows by this time that we are both out here, but he does not come—he does not follow me to this place, because he knows you are here, too."

"By George, I think you're right!" admitted Denison. "It looks that way."

"Yes. While he has been watching me, I have been watching him. He manages to spend a good deal of his time in the saloon, especially while the Chinese steward is making up his room. At first, I thought Engstrom had put his money all in the ship's safe."

"Are you sure that he hasn't?"

"I am sure. To find out, I asked the captain to let me put money in the safe—and said Engstrom had already done so. But the captain deny that this is so. Thus, I put my bag in a spare cabin under lock and key, for while it has nothing of value in it, I want to see if Engstrom will find it out."

"How will you know that he has done that, unless the captain tells you."

"Captain Goodwin will not tell me, because I will not ask. But I can learn what has become of Engstrom's black bag. I have somebody to watch for me."

"Ah! Have you? That is handy. I presume that you have bribed the steward, eh? That would be a good way."

"I have my own way," said Rollais. "But I think that Mr. Engstrom feels safer if his bag is in his room—carelessly in place, as if it did not matter much. Only he makes sure to keep watch when the steward is around his room on duty. And, to tell you the truth, Engstrom manages to spend a good deal of his time with you—perhaps you have noticed this?"

"I haven't especially noticed it," said Denison, wary now. "I don't believe that he spends as much time with me, as a matter of fact, as he does with you. Really, I've been under the impression that he's kept away from me lately when I was alone."

"That is because he is watching me," said Rollais. "And he feels that if he knows where I am, you are not likely to try and rob him—all alone, by yourself."

"Rob him! Then you think he really is afraid that I'll rob him?"

"Not you alone—both of us together."

"That's absurd!" declared Denison.

"A man with a fortune, he is likely to have absurd notions about passengers. Especially, when one of them has been insulted by the police."

"True enough, Rollais. But this matter of how you are so sure Engstrom has the money. You have not told me yet."

"I got the information from friends in a bank in Manila."

"You mean an inside tip?"

"That is it."

"You mean employees of the bank?" pressed Denison.

"Who it is does not matter," said Rollais coldly.

"But you do mean that you got what is called inside information?"

"Yes, I sometimes get this information. I need it in my business."

"Your business! Pardon me, of course, a man in business often learns things which outsiders do not. But what is your business?"

"You have not guessed?" asked Rollais.

"No—except what I already have learned from you—that you are a planter's son. However, you speak now of being in business."

"I am not the son of a planter—and it would perhaps be better if I referred not to my business, but to my profession."

"What is that?"

"I took you for a very astute man, Mr. Denison. Is it possible you are still in the dark?"

"I am very much in the dark, yes," said Denison. "But I do not want to insist that you tell me of your personal history. However, if you know so much about Engstrom's money, you must know why he is carrying it to Lantu-Vanna—and in a bag."

"Certainly I know why he is carry it. I should not have told you so much if I did did not trust you fully. Engstrom is carrying this money to pay for the concession to an island known as the Floating Garden—a very rich island, which is being bought by the big syndicate of plantations, headed by a Mr. Cumberlee. And for certain reason, this money has to be paid in cash."

Denison had difficulty in refraining from laughter. Here was the very story he had heard from Engstrom!

Then, like a flash, Denison's inward mirth, changed to alarm.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed mentally. "Rollais heard every word Engstrom said to me—and he's taking this way of letting me know that the whole plot is in his possession!"

When he had brought his emotions under control, and felt that he could speak without betraying his anxiety, he began to talk to Rollais in a most disinterested tone.

"You seem to know," he said, "what you're talking about, Rollais. The reason for carrying so much cash is logical enough. But it strikes me that you must have some special reason for taking me into your confidence on such an important secret. I am highly interested, of course—but such things are not revealed to casual acquaintances on shipboard. You have admitted that you have inside information out of a bank in Manila, you have revealed the fact that Engstrom has a fortune, you are most mysterious about your profession at the same time that you have admitted that you are not what we have all supposed from the first—that you are a planter's son from the group of islands about Lantu-Vanna. And on top of all this, you calmly tell me that Engstrom believes you and I are on the *Maori Chief* for the purpose of robbing him. Frankly, my friend, it is all most astounding to me."

"Astounding, perhaps," said Rollais, his voice coming out of the darkness like a silken thread of sound. "You have already uttered the very reason why I have told you all this."

"When did I utter it?"

"You said Engstrom feared you and I would rob him."

"But why should he fear such a thing?"

"Because," said Rollais, with laughter in his voice now, "it is true."

"True! Now, look here, Rollais! Stop talking riddles."

"There is no riddle, as you call it, about the whole business. It is my intention to have, by the time this steamer reaches Lantu-Vanna, that four hundred thousand dollars."

## XIV

DENISON did not speak for several minutes. And as he thought over the amazing fact that Rollais should admit that he intended to commit robbery, Denison realized that the safest thing for him to do was not to object. He remembered that Rollais had with him that cane which undoubtedly concealed in its wood a lithe and long blade.

"Again, Mr. Rollais," remarked Denison, "I must admit that you have shown a willingness to trust me. I respect your judgment and admire your nerve."

"I have been very careful before I take this matter up with you," said Rollais. "I have study you—I have consider in my own mind. Now I know I was right."

"But why, if you don't mind telling me, have you told me at all?"

"Because you are to share in the money, Mr. Denison."

"I am to share—in Engstrom's money—which you are going to take from him?"

"Of course. But I expect you to help."

"Why were you so sure I would help?"

"Because you are a criminal," said Rollais.

"I don't like that word very well. You might use some term a trifle more—er—delicate, my friend."

"Oh, do not be angry with my use of English words. I know you do not like the word—but excuse me if I do not always select the proper language. I knew when the police talk to you, that maybe you help me. I know you be a good man for it, if you will assent—you will do that?"

"You want me to go in with you, and share half and half?"

"That is it! Why not! This swine of an Engstrom—we are too smart for him. We pick up a fortune—easy."

"Ah, yes, you say easy. But that is another story. How are you so sure it will be easy? How is it to be done?"

"I will kill him. I am very good with the knife—quick and silent. And if you help me, all we have to do is put the bag from Engstrom's room into yours—one door to another, that is all. You understand? You are fortunate that your room is next to his."

"Yes, that is fortunate," admitted Denison. "Also, it is easier for me to be caught with the money—and held for murder—after you have killed Engstrom."

"Who will do that?" asked Rollais, as if the thought was surprizing to him on account of being beyond the realm of possibility.

"Why, Captain Goodwin, of course."

"But we won't let him do that," said Rollais, as if the whole thing was so simple that there was no necessity for discussing it.

"Who's going to stop him?" asked Denison, beginning to believe that he had dipped into something which was deeper than he had ever realized.

"I also kill Captain Goodwin."

"But there is the mate, Mr. John—that big hulking fellow who looks as if, with a knife, he could cut his way through a dozen men armed with knives. Would you kill him, too?"

"I don't have to kill him," said Rollais. "He is no problem to us at all."

"Why not? Do you think he is going to know that you've killed two men, including his skipper, and sail into Lantu-Vanna with us, and let us walk down the gang-plank?"

Rollais laughed quietly.

"As I have said, there is no trouble about the mate. Mr. John, he is help me—we will give him a little of the money for his services."

"The dickens he will!" said Denison, sitting up in his hammock now. "Are you sure of that? Have you talked with him?"

"It is all arrange," said Rollais. "Before I come on board. Mr. John knows what I am to do—and then he sail the steamer to a handy island for us, and we get away, and he go on to Lantu-Vanna. Or we burn the steamer at this new island, and we hide the money, or we go away in boats and be picked up as shipwrecked men. That is all a matter of detail, to be arrange as we need it, after we have got the cash."

"Well, of course," said the amazed Denison. "It *is* easy, with the way you've got things fixed up. The very simplicity of it is not only amazing—it has certain—er—charm. At fixing all the little details for picking up a fortune, you are a master hand, Mr. Rollais. I congratulate you!"

"I thank you," said Rollais, modestly. "I am glad that you like my methods. And I see that I have done the right thing to talk it over with you. I was sure a man like you would be willing to come in and get a fortune with one—or two—twists of the knife."

"Perhaps I ought to think this over a little more," said Denison. "It's hard to grasp it all in a minute. I hardly know what to say. It has come on me so sudden, and——"

"You say nothing," said Rollais. "It is not necessary for you even to think. You just listen to me, as I plan it out bit by bit from now on, and wait until I am ready to strike. I fix it—and we counsel together about it. We will not let Mr. Engstrom know that we have the slightest idea he has this money in his cabin. As usual, we shall play cards a little during the day, we shall be friends with him, we shall listen to him talk, we shall hold his confidence—then, the proper time come—I strike so quick, and my knife go so deep—*pouff!* It is all over!"

"Oh, we'll have to be careful that Engstrom is kept totally in the dark," agreed Denison. "And if he gets any inkling that there is anything going on between us, that will be fatal for our plans. So we must be very discreet from now on—both with Mr. Engstrom and Captain Goodwin, and everybody in the ship."

"That will be easy," said Rollais.

"Of course," went on Denison, "now that I know you have Mr. John in with you, the whole thing looks simple. Are you sure he can be trusted? That he will not betray us at the critical moment? That he has not already warned Captain Goodwin?"

"He is perfectly safe, Mr. John," said Rollais with conviction. "I have know him a long time."

"That may be true. But are you *sure* of him?"

"He was in prison in Saigon, five years ago. So I know I can trust him. He is one of us—he has a long record of crime, and nobody but me know it. Captain Goodwin would be very much surprize if he hear it—so I have the whip on Mr. John's shoulders."

Denison was glad that the expression on his face could not be seen in the darkness.

"Then that is a closed proposition," he said easily. "I am a little surprized to hear all this—it never occurred to me that Mr. John would be of the slightest use in any kind of business such as we are planning."

"He is a very good man," said Rollais. "And as for myself—I plan my things carefully, so I never fail."

"But how did you come to know Mr. John so well?"

"He was in prison with me."

"You must have failed—once," said Denison.

"That was a trifling matter. I was only held on suspicion for a time, but the French could prove nothing against me. I was out in a few weeks—but Mr. John, he was serving three years for a robbery. So we planned then, that when he went back to sea, we should work together when we saw some rich prize. This is the first time we could find anything that would be worth the trouble."

"But if he is already in partnership with you, how can you give me half?" asked Denison.

"He does not know how much money there is. I will give him five thousand dollars, and he be satisfied. It is just as well that he not know too much about it, or he be greedy. You know how the lower classes are greedy for money? Yes? Too much is not good for them. They have a lot, they spoil the whole business making fools of themselves. They get drunk, they spend so much it look suspicious to the police. So I tell Mr. John that Engstrom have fifteen thousand dollars, and I give him a third, because I have another partner who must get a third."

"Did you tell him who this other partner is to be?"

"No. I decide not to. It is better if he not know. Then he not be sure, and he take care not to be too smart. He does not know who to be afraid of. He do nothing at all, until we are ready—then, maybe, he have to kill the captain. It is just as well to have him do something criminal in the business in order to earn his money, for then his mouth is stopped up. Then he can not do what you call it in American—what is it—the big squeal."

"That's it. And you certainly have planned this job well, as I've said before."

"You, also," said Rollais, "must be a keen man to be able to laugh at the police and sail away from Manila, as you did. It was magnificent! It was superb! I say to myself at that time, 'This is the man for me—he is a criminal, he is a gentleman, he can be trusted, he have brains.' So! I tell it to you of the money Engstrom has."

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate all this," said Denison. "I feel honored—flattered! But to think of it! The half of four hundred thousand dollars! I am still, my dear Rollais, in a state of collapse at the idea that I am to have a fortune handed me—and gain for a friend a man who is so amazingly an artist in planning a robbery. Still—I shall have to think it over."

"What is there to think of?" asked Rollais in amazement. "It is all thought of—everything!"

"You must not overlook the fact that of the three passengers aboard, I am the one known to the captain as a man who has a police record. That means I shall be in trouble from the first, so we must perfect your plans a little more. The time and the place must be worked out in great detail, and I must grasp——"

"There is nothing to grasp," broke in Rollais, "but that bag of money. I need your help. Mr. John is all right, but he is a peasant, you know. One must have a gentleman with him in such a big business. So I have decided. Now I shall leave you and go forward, or Engstrom will be suspicious that we have been missing so long. You come a little later. You will find me in the social-hall and propose that we drink a bottle of wine. We three shall drink—

and really, together you and I shall be drinking a toast to the speedy destruction of Engstrom, and his money in our possession. That is all. I leave you now."

Denison sprang out of the hammock.

"Let us shake hands on it, my friend. Again I congratulate you—and we shall drink wine with the very man we shall kill. You, too, my dear Rollais, are magnificent!"

"I thank you for those words," said Rollais. "We shake the hands, yes—it is the American custom in such cases. Good!"

Rollais, after they had shaken hands, moved away and disappeared down the ladder.

## XV

DENISON and Rollais cracked a bottle of wine and drank it with Engstrom. The trio did not break up until after midnight, and knowing that if he took up the subject of what Rollais had broached on the quarter-deck, Engstrom would not be likely to let him sleep. Denison gave no warning of what was in the wind. Also, Denison wanted more time to consider the entire matter himself. He knew that he was in a dangerous situation—just how dangerous he could not tell until he had studied the situation further.

As he saw it, Denison had little reason to rely on the veracity of either Engstrom or Rollais. With each telling the same story and suggesting that he join in a robbery, there was a chance that he might be betrayed from some quarter—and that the captain was in with one of the men. It was not outside the bounds of reason, as Denison considered the problem, that Captain Goodwin was in the confidence of one of them; that is, that the skipper was anxious to get evidence of Denison's willingness to participate in a crime aboard the *Maori Chief*. For Denison, the proposition was full of peril—and he well understood it.

So it was not until the next afternoon that Denison felt at all capable of coping with what confronted him. He decided that Engstrom was the man to deal with, though just how he should handle the matter was not clear to him; he decided to let things shape themselves after he had seen Engstrom's reactions to what the Dutchman was to learn.

The pair got up on the boat-deck, abaft the funnel, and far enough aft to be able to see below into the well-deck. In between a pair of lifeboats they had a view which prevented anybody's getting within fifty feet of them without disclosing his presence—a person could only come to that deck by the little ladder which ran up from the fiddley.

"We are blocked," said Denison. "It looks as if not only Rollais, but Captain Goodwin as well, know what we have been planning."

Engstrom's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped, and his sallow face took on a red color. His breath came in quick gasps, like a fish that has been netted and is struggling in a deadly element.

"You—you say this!" gurgled Engstrom. "What does it mean? You look like disaster! Vot is this?"

"Rollais told me last night—before the wine—that it is *you* who has the four hundred thousand dollars! The same identical story about you that you told me, and——"

"——!" exclaimed the Dutchman under his breath. "Somebody is crassy!"

So astounded by what he heard that his thick accent came to the surface of his speech.

Denison shook his head in discouragement.

"It looks bad," he said. "They're on! We haven't a chance to pull off this thing, at least, on board the *Maori Chief*."

A new light came into Engstrom's eyes. He held out a hand and touched Denison's hand.

"You pelieve dot I am the man who has the money in my pag?"

"No, no, that is not the——"

"A chackass you vould pe if you dit!" whispered Engstrom. "Vait! I proof somet'ing to you!"

He fumbled in his pockets and drew out a brass key.

"Here is my key," he went on, his hand shaking as he extended the key to Denison. "Take it! I haff locked my capin vhen I come up. You go pelow for yourself and look in my plack pag! You vill find it, chust as he say, but if you looks in it, you see that I have no fortune!"

Denison waved the key away, and leaned back against the fairing of the lifeboat so that he could see all around except to seaward.

"My dear Engstrom," he said, "Do you think that if I believed Rollais I should be foolish enough to be up here talking with you? No, no, that is not the point at all—it is that Rollais must know what we are planning, otherwise he could not come and give me that story."

Engstrom, a trifle steadied by Denison's trust in him, was quieter now. He only stood and stared, while the eyes back of the glasses revealed his mental calculations on the situation.

"Oh, sure, he must know," admitted Engstrom finally. "But it does no damage—we kill him just the same."

"We must move very slowly with anything like that, in the light of what we know—and what Rollais knows. And I believe that he has already told the captain."

Engstrom nodded soberly.

"It iss somet'ing they haff cooked," he agreed. "Goodvin is in it. I tell you why. Rollais and the captain, they fool me, last night! I sits there in my capin and listens, and for a long time that svine of a Goodvin he talks, and I thinks he iss saying things to Rollais! Then Goodvin goes, and Rollais is not there. Gott but I vas mat!"

"You see?" said Denison. "They put something over on you. It was done to give Rollais a chance to talk with me—and another reason why I'm sure Goodwin is in on it is that Goodwin let Rollais go out through the galley passage. He had just given orders no passengers were to use that door—but he broke his rule for Rollais."

"I kill the two of him!" declared Engstrom.

"Now don't go off half-cocked on anything!" warned Denison. "We don't know how many men aboard this steamer are in on whatever it is that Captain Goodwin and Rollais know. There is plenty of time before we get to Lantu-Vanna to do whatever we decide to do—and we'd better play a safe game. The stakes are worth a little caution, my friend. One false move, and we lose the whole thing and get caught in the bargain."

Engstrom felt better at once on the assurance that Denison had not abandoned the whole scheme.

"You are right, I know," he admitted.

And then, his face lighting as if with sudden inspiration, he changed the line of thought.

"There is something wrong with our belief that Rollais knows *anything*—he only suspects us."

"How do you figure that out?"

"If he and Goodwin knew what our plan was—they would not have Rollais tell you what he has. They would not need to, if they *knew* it is only to see if you could be startled into making a fool of yourself in some way."

"How do you mean?"

"Rollais expected you to be so surprized that you would collapse—or you would be very excited. You took it very cool, and *you* have fooled *them!* Is it not so? Did you not take it all very calmly?"

"Why, I agreed to go in with him and help rob you," said Denison.

"Good! Excellent! Now, we have them! And you did not hurry to me last night to tell me. So Rollais has nothing to go on. It is impossible, as he sees it, that you would take up the robbery with him, if you had already planned the same thing against him with me. What Rollais said to you, proves just one thing."

"What is that?"

"That he, himself, has the money. He is afraid he will be robbed. Naturally, he thinks of you as the most dangerous man on board, on account of the trouble you had with the police. So, to test you, he tells you I have the money, to see if you would engage in robbing him. He wants to see if you know—if I have talked with you about it. Now, what does he know? Only this is he sure of—it is that you are a criminal."

"By George, I guess you're right," admitted Denison.

"Sure I am right! And I bet he makes the same proposition to me—that you have money, and that if I will help him, he will rob you. By this trick, he keeps us apart, so we do not plan to rob him."

"Pretty clever work," admitted Denison.

"That man, he has the brain of a fiend. And he has got you in a trap."

"But look at the situation I was in," protested Denison. "I had to fall in with his plan. If I had refused, it would have clinched their suspicions. As it is, Rollais feels safe, so far as I am concerned——"

"You did just right," broke in Engstrom. "The other way would have been disaster. He can now only draw one of two conclusions—that you believe his story about my having the money, or that you already know he has the money. If it is the last he decides, he feels you will not dare rob him because you have agreed to rob me—

because you have shown to him that you are willing to commit a crime. He feels that he has made you afraid to rob him."

Denison felt that sound logic was on the side of Engstrom, yet the young American distrusted the cocksureness of this man who thrust aside every difficulty with an argument which lacked nothing, apparently, that pointed to success in their undertaking. Denison had no wish to become involved in a murder with such a man, for it was plain that Engstrom was bent upon killing first and taking chances afterward. He could not be diverted from his eagerness to carry out what he had planned from the first.

And it seemed to Denison that the more obstacles they found, the more willing Engstrom was to precipitate his crime. Every fact which Denison brought up and revealed as a reason for delay only seemed to egg Engstrom on. His greed for the money grew just in proportion as he found himself blocked, and there seemed no chance of controlling him. So Denison decided it would not be safe to tell Engstrom that Mr. John was represented as a confederate of Rollais. The Dutchman might dash up on the bridge and stab the mate. For all of Engstrom's outward common-sense in his reasoning, Denison knew that the chap was seething inside with a blind frenzy that called for violence.

"You've convinced me," said Denison finally, "that we needn't worry. We can go ahead when we are ready, but I want you to make one promise."

"Vat iss it?" asked Engstrom.

"As I am in with you on this, I must have equal voice in what is to be done—before it is done. I agree to do nothing on my own judgment until I have told you about it and asked your opinion. I know you can handle these things better than I can. But, you must agree not to act without consulting me. If you can't promise that, I'll drop the whole affair."

"Oh, sure, I'll tell you everything," assented Engstrom. "Ve vork togedder—it's a pargain!"

"Then let's lay off for a couple of days, and watch how things fall," said Denison. "There's plenty of time before we get to Lantu-Vanna, and we may learn something that will make things all the easier."

Engstrom nodded his assent, and well-satisfied with how he had disposed of Denison's fears about Rollais, descended to the saloon-deck. A quarter of an hour later the three passengers were playing cards.

## XVI

DENISON did not know how long he had been asleep. The card-game had been prolonged, chiefly on Engstrom's insistence, until midnight. All three had turned in at the same time, and now Denison heard somebody moving in the passage outside his cabin.

He had kept his door on the hook lately, and the hook secured with a bit of wire. With two men bent on murder, he found that precautions for his own security made his sleep a trifle more restful.

There was a single electric light burning in the far end of the dining-saloon, but it was too far away from the cabin-passage to break the gloom. Denison listened to the sounds which had wakened him, and now he was sure that some one was prowling just outside his door. He could hear a man breathing, and it seemed that this man had his head close to the narrow opening between door-edge and casing—a matter of three inches.

Denison moved enough to grasp the pistol under his pillow. Then he made a hissing sound to warn the man outside that the supposed sleeper was on the alert.

"You are avake?" came Engstrom's voice in a whisper that was so low that Denison barely heard it.

"Yes. What's up?"

"I am going to see if Rollais is in his cabin. I think I heard him moving around in his passage."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I go for a drink of vater—and I put out the light in the saloon. You come to the foot of the stairs, and watch for me to make sure he do not get behind me if he is outside his room."

It seemed to Denison that there was more excitement in Engstrom's voice than was warranted in merely getting a drink of water and making sure of where Rollais might be. But it was no time to argue, and Denison saw at once that if Engstrom intended to take any action, it would be easier to check anything rash by being outside than in his cabin.

Without a word he got up, slipped the wire loop off the hook of the door, and in pajamas and bare feet, stepped out on the carpet, intending to question Engstrom as to his full intentions. It looked as if Engstrom was about to start something on his own account.

This belief of Denison's was strengthened when he found that Engstrom did not wait for him in the passage, but was already on his way across the dining-saloon toward the rack which held the water-bottles.

So Denison went to the end of the passage and stood near the foot of the stairway. From here he saw Engstrom fill a glass and drink, keeping his eyes on the little passage which led to the cabin occupied by Rollais.

It was easy to move about without making a noise, for the creakings of the woodwork, the dull vibration of the engines below, and the throb of the propeller filled the steamer with a multiplicity of sounds.

When the Dutchman had refreshed himself with water, he went to the table and putting a knee on a swivel-chair, reached up and unscrewed the bulb from the socket in the angle-iron overhead. At once the saloon was a pit of blackness, relieved only by the rows of illumined portholes where the swaying curtains let moonlight splash into the room.

Where Denison stood it was darker than in any other place, except in the passages on each side of the stairs. He caught fleeting glimpses of Engstrom moving cautiously forward again, revealed as he passed through the beams of moonlight shot through the ports when the steamer rolled toward the moon.

Engstrom was heading for the passage at the other side of the stairs—that passage which ran parallel to the one used by Denison and Engstrom.

"That fool is forcing things," thought Denison, as he saw Engstrom disappear into the other passage.

He felt that the Dutchman was acting without sufficient plan, and that they were risking being caught lurking about the darkened saloon. It was taking dangerous chances, for the Chinese steward who was on watch in the galley might at any minute discover that the light was out in the saloon, and switch on all the lights if he came to investigate.

Just then six bells struck somewhere forward—it was three o'clock in the morning.

After all, Denison reasoned, Engstrom was not a man to walk out of his cabin and commit a murder without proper preparation. They still lacked the key to the spare cabin in which the money was hidden, and it was absurd to suppose that Engstrom would kill Rollais until the key had been secured from his neck and the bag with the money stowed in some secret place. So far as they had planned anything, the money was to be in the ship's safe before Rollais was dead.

So Denison did not expect an attack. At the most, Engstrom had probably felt it wise to find out just what precautions Rollais might be taking to protect himself. Still, Denison had no desire to be caught out in the saloon with Engstrom in the other passage. It would be a situation not to be easily explained away, and that Chinese steward was what Denison was thinking of now. It would be bad enough for Engstrom to be detected in that passage where he had no business, but that Denison should be obviously on watch for the culprit would only make it more serious for both of them. Denison moved up a few steps on the stairs, so as to be able to escape in either direction—either through the social-hall to the deck, in case somebody came blundering down that way, or back to his cabin if the steward came out from the galley.

Half-way up the stairs, he was startled by a sudden and violent crash in that passage where Engstrom had disappeared. It was somewhat muffled, as if Engstrom had bumped full tilt into some of the wooden paneling. But what struck Denison as queer was the fact that the sound did not come from well inside the passage, but seemed to have originated close to the base of the stairs—and by this time Engstrom should be ten feet away from the bottom of the stairs.

Denison stopped, wondering what that dull crash could mean. There was nothing more of a similar nature for several minutes. Then he heard somebody panting for breath, but at wide intervals, as if the breather were making desperate efforts to lift something which resisted his strength.

Again there came a dull crash, as of a soft body being hurled against the wood paneling of the dining-saloon. This was repeated several times, with a considerable space between—a minute or two. It sounded to Denison like the thuds of a heavily-wrapped mop coming in contact with a baseboard as a worker cleaned a floor and was careless about making noises.

Presently this thudding sound changed its quality. It became more like silent scuffling, as if two men were in a wordless conflict in the darkness below. There was a rapid succession of bumps such as might be made by elbows or knees being struck against a bulkhead. Denison felt the balustrade of the stairs quivering. It seemed that one of the strugglers had seized the stanchions on each side of the stairs. Now the muffled tumult was diversified by suppressed grunts and low, moaning groans.

Denison leaped up the stairs. It was no mystery to him now, what had happened—Engstrom had encountered somebody in the passage and they had struggled out together into the dining-saloon. And it looked as if neither person engaged in the strife wished to call for help or give an alarm.

Denison had only one thought now—to get help. But he did not want to cry out while he was still so near to the battle below, for it would look as if he were engaged in it. He wanted to clear his own skirts by having no knowledge of what it was all about—at least, he should attempt to make it appear that he was neutral.

By the time he had gained the social-hall, there was a wild yell—a scream that must have been heard all over the steamer, a scream that seemed to exhaust the last bit of air from the man's lungs. Then the sound died away in a coughing, whining sob.

## XVII

AFTER that terrible scream, there was silence for a minute. Then a subdued voice began to moan—a most peculiar moan, that sounded like a chanting of a song by some lout too drunk to pronounce the words of the chant or to put anything of the music of the tune into the mumbling of the refrain.

Suddenly the saloon was illumined by a great splash of light. It came from the door leading to the galley—at the far end, where Engstrom had found the water. Denison was blinded for an instant by this yellow flare. Then he saw the figure of the Chinese steward outlined against the flood of brilliance. He was crouched in the doorway, looking across the length of the saloon in the direction of the stairs.

Denison leaped for the door of the social-hall on the side which let out on deck—the starboard side where Captain Goodwin's cabin was located. At the same time Denison yelled at the top of his voice:

"Captain Goodwin! The officer of the deck! The bridge! Send somebody—quick!"

He heard the heavy clumping of shoes on the bridge above, an inarticulate shout from that direction, and then the musical clanging of the iron ladder as somebody came clattering down in the vague moonlight.

There was a flash of light from the port-hole of Captain Goodwin's cabin. It pierced the gloom of the saloon deck like a hole burst through a wall by a projectile and then lighted up by a steady flame. The next instant the skipper came tumbling out on deck with a revolver in one hand and a belaying-pin in the other, made visible for an instant by the light that seemed to hurl him outward through the door.

"What is it? What's wrong, Mr. John?" bawled the skipper.

He seemed to be under the impression that it was the mate who had called him. And as he came running for the bridge-ladder, Mr. John came hurtling down upon him. The pair went staggering against the bulkhead as the steamer rolled deeply.

"What is it, sir?" boomed the voice of the mate.

He thought it was the captain who had called for help.

"This way! Below—to the saloon!" shouted Denison.

He stood in the doorway of the social-hall, but Captain Goodwin, confused and as yet but half-awake, did not hear—or if he did, still thought that the mate had come from the bridge for him. And with that training which always drives the master to the bridge in time of emergency, he headed for the ladder.

"What the —— do you want, sir?" demanded Mr. John, and grasped the skipper's arm.

The mate began to shout something which Denison could not understand.

"What *is* it?" cried Goodwin in desperation. "You big lummox, you come tumbling down and then you can't talk so I know what's the trouble! How can I do anything if you don't tell me?"

His voice broke into an irritable complaint.

Denison ran out on deck and grabbed Goodwin by the shoulder.

"It's below—something—I don't know what! I heard a scream—I think somebody has been murdered! This way!"

He ran to the door of the social-hall and, holding it open, beckoned them after him.

Captain Goodwin came pattering along in his bare feet, just as the Chinese steward was turning on all the lights of the saloon at the switch below.

At the head of the stairs, as the three looked down, they saw in the full brilliance of the lights, the figures of two men locked together at the foot of the stairway, their pajamaed legs sprawled out at grotesque angles. They lay still.

The uppermost man, Denison saw, was Engstrom. His face was buried in Rollais' back at the shoulder-blades. Rollais was face down on the strip of carpet, his legs sticking out on the port side, Engstrom's on the starboard side of the stairway.

The silk garments which they both wore were mottled by great dark, irregular stains, like the prints of hands. There was one great dark stain that was steadily growing upward from the sides of Engstrom.

The two men still clung to each other, but only one arm of each was visible. The other arms were under them.

Denison saw at once what had happened—they had stabbed each other to death in their struggles, and had fallen together.

"Now what's this all about?" cried Captain Goodwin, as he went down and stopped three steps from the bottom of the stairs.

He stared down upon the bodies. Denison was just behind him, and above Denison, peering over his shoulder, was Mr. John. The mate said nothing, but his breath made Denison's hair flutter.

Nobody answered Captain Goodwin's question. The Chinese steward stood a few feet from the bodies, looking at them casually, and Chan, the chief of the Chinese servants, came grumbling out through the galley passage.

Captain Goodwin went on down the stairs, stepping gingerly as if afraid of cutting his feet on the old brass plates. His revolver and belaying-pin were held out from him, and moved up and down as he walked, so that he looked like an old goose with flapping wings. He got round the bodies and stood for a few minutes before the two Chinese, looking down on the bodies.

"Be they dead?" asked the captain, looking up to Denison with blinking eyes.

Then, as if he already knew the answer to his question, his jaw dropped, his mouth hung open while his breath came wheezily, and a spasm such as might have been caused by pain crossed his face. His hair was rumpled and stood up on his head like the crest of a bird. As he turned his head sidewise, Denison observed that Goodwin had cotton in his ears.

"They must be dead," said Denison. "Neither of them has moved. I'd say they've stabbed each other."

Captain Goodwin's head snapped back with a convulsive gesture. This seemed to be the first instant that he fully comprehended what had happened.

"You'd *say* they'd *stabbed* each other!" snorted Captain Goodwin in sudden frenzy. "You'd *say!*"

"Well, you asked me," said Denison. "What else could I say, if you wanted an answer."

"You could say what you *know!*" snapped the skipper.

"All right," retorted Denison calmly. "I'm willing to say that I *know* they stabbed each other, if that'll make you feel any better about it, Captain Goodwin."

He descended the remaining steps, and stood clear of the bodies and the widening stain that was growing over the carpet.

"This is a —— of a note!" said Goodwin. "What did they want to fight for? Why, I never had anything like this happen aboard me before! It's a disgrace—and the lot of you—all as thick as peas in a pod. Say, look here, you Mr. Denison! You ought to know more about this than you claim you do!"

"If you want to question me," said Denison, "you'd better wait until a little later. This is no time to talk loosely."

Goodwin disregarded the words as if he had not heard them. He reached down, threw his belaying-pin on the carpet, and held his revolver forward. It looked as if he expected one of the dead men to attack him. He carefully touched the jacket of Engstrom at one of the shoulders. Then, as if that act brought his mind to some decision, the captain straightened up and turned to Denison.

"I might've known you'd be up to something," he said crossly. "Wish I'd dumped you ashore when the police came out. If I'd ha' had good sense then, I'd ha' sent you packing ashore along with the constables."

"Just what do you mean by that statement, captain?" asked Denison. He was not quite sure that Goodwin did not know more than he admitted himself. Denison suspected that the captain was seeking a scapegoat.

"I mean that there's every mark that you've had a hand in this work, young man."

"I think you've gone crazy," said Denison, but without any show of anger. "Just because you're excited at finding two of your passengers dead—and they've murdered each other, as anybody with any brains at all can see—is no reason why you should turn on me and accuse me of the crime, or a hand in it."

"I ain't accused you of anything," said the skipper with a blustering tone. "I've said you had a hand in it, and so I believe. Now, how did you happen to be so up and ready to make a call for us, Mr. Denison?"

"I heard the sound of somebody struggling out here. The saloon light was out. So I ran up the stairs and called you—just as I heard an awful scream."

Captain Goodwin shook his head with exaggerated wisdom.

"A pretty story, I must say."

"Do you object because I happen to tell the truth, captain?"

"You mean to stand there and tell me you climbed over these men—while they were fighting—and run up the stairs to call us? Look at 'em! They're laying athwart the steps! How could you get through two men stabbing each other *here?*"

"They didn't happen to be at this spot as I ran up, that's all," said Denison. "They seemed to be over in the passage that leads to Rollais' cabin. I was at the top of the stairs when the Chinese boy opened the door from the galley passage and I'll bet he'll say he saw me. Ask him if I wasn't already up in the social-hall when he opened that door—*after* the scream? There was light enough here then for him to see me, and he'll have to say that just as he opened the door he heard me yell. How could I have anything to do with it, if I was calling for somebody?"

Captain Goodwin pondered the matter for a minute. Finally he turned to the Chinese boy who stood near Chan.

"You see this man topside when you look out this side?"

"Him be topside. I see him," said the Chinese.

Captain Goodwin turned round on Denison again.

"That's all right as far as it goes," said the captain. "I don't much care where you happened to be. You had no business to be running around in the dark down here. And why was it dark, anyway? You should have stuck to your cabin, but you didn't. There's always one bulb burning in the saloon at night. How did it come to be out?"

"I presume that somebody put it out," replied Denison.

"You're a first-chop presumer," sneered Goodwin. "And I presume you think you can fool the authorities in Lantu-Vanna?"

"That's for the authorities themselves to decide," said Denison.

"I'm glad you're willing to admit that *somebody* will decide something. You don't seem to think that anybody knows much but you, and that's where you're fooled."

"I protest against being accused of this crime," said Denison sharply. "And it's quite likely that you don't know everything yourself. I'm perfectly willing to tell the police all I know about it, but I don't intend to be marked as a murderer by you, Captain Goodwin. What do you expect me to do when two men are killing each other below here? Wait until I have your permission to leave my cabin? If I'd remained in my cabin, you'd say that was suspicious. I was out on the stairs, so you say that proves I had a hand in the crime. There's no way to suit you."

"What about that little pistol in your jacket pocket?" asked Goodwin.

He pointed to a side pocket of Denison's pajama.

"I had it in my hand when I came out here. I've a right to defend myself from attack."

Captain Goodwin sniffed with contempt.

"You're as bright as a new half-crown! As to the police in Lantu-Vanna, you may be able to fool them, just as you tried to fool me—with strips of paper the size of banknotes, tied up and sealed, and put in the ship's safe. That'll be something for you to explain to the police, young man!"

"You opened my packages!" exclaimed Denison. "You had no right to do that!"

"I've a right to do anything when I know there's crookedness going on in this ship. Now go to your cabin. You can do your explaining at Lantu-Vanna!"

Denison, taken aback at the news that Captain Goodwin had broken into the dummy packages, decided that it would be wise to avoid further discussion. So with a nod of submission, he turned and walked into the passage to his cabin.

### XVIII

JUST as the sun appeared over the mountains of the beautiful land-locked harbor of Lantu-Vanna, the *Maori Chief* steamed in for the quarantine anchorage. As she dropped her anchor off the little jetty, a quarter of a mile from shore, the pennant which called for the police fluttered up a forestay under the yellow quarantine flag at the foremast.

Already the launch of the medical officer of the port was heading for the steamer. And as the police-call was displayed, there was great activity at the little white building which was the headquarters of the harbor master and the district constabulary.

Captain Goodwin, loafing on the bridge, saw the police launch being manned by half a dozen native constables. Then a white man, in khaki uniform and big sun-helmet, came running down the jetty, buckling on a belt with revolvers as he ran. The launch came churning over the placid water of the bay, the black men at the rail with their rifles sticking out under the white awning.

The port doctor did not drive his boat straight up to the accommodation-ladder over the steamer's side. He held off, and hailed Captain Goodwin.

"What's the matter, mutiny?"

"Couple of passengers murdered, and I'm holding another. Want to give him in charge. He has a revolver, and refused to give it up so we'll have to be a bit careful."

"Murderer, eh? That's interesting. Have you any sickness?"

"Not that I know of," said the skipper.

"Then I think I can let the police aboard first," said the doctor. "It's not my business to take murderers, especially when they have revolvers. So I'll see about health after Jimmy Swift and his black boys collect the artillery."

The police launch came alongside the ladder, after a nod which the man in white gave to the doctor. He who wore the helmet was Inspector Swift, military and efficient, for he was over the side of the steamer in six bounds, not bothering to see how close after him his constables followed.

Captain Goodwin met the inspector at the rail, and explained what had happened.

"He's below now, in the saloon. There was no use in confining him. He's had the run of the ship. A smooth customer, I tell you, sir. I know he intends to do something desperate—he's been so cool and insolent about it all. Never gave me a bit of trouble after I let him know I was up to his tricks. He's a bad 'un—police came aboard me in Manila just before I sailed, and all but arrested him for some criminal business he'd been up to. But they lacked proper evidence, so he slipped through their fingers. And the passengers he murdered—or helped to murder—were the nicest kind of men. Quiet and good-mannered they were, and though I warned 'em against this chap Denison, they went on and mixed with him, and see what came of it. You take him in charge, but mind your eye. He won't give up his gun, and threatened to shoot me if I didn't leave him alone. So I played him smooth till I could have you to grab him. I'll give you all the details when you've got him safe."

Inspector Swift nodded, gestured one of his men to follow him, and without drawing a weapon, walked through the social-hall and descended the stairs, clicking a riding-whip against his boots as he went and whistling a gay little air.

Captain Goodwin did not go below. Another launch was bearing down on the steamer, and as Goodwin expected his owner's agents were in the third launch, he fussed with his papers and manifests.

Presently Chan appeared in the captain's cabin.

"All good," he pronounced. "Policey man, him say tell doctor boss come along this side."

"Got him, eh?" asked Goodwin.

"Him catch him ploper—more better now," said Chan, and padded away below.

The doctor came aboard and had the crew lined up on the foredeck. Then the yellow flag came down. By this time that third launch was alongside, and a big, red-faced man, all in white and wearing a big straw hat, came up the ladder. He looked prosperous, smoked a rich cigar, and had a cold, slow-moving eye. His mustache was gray, and he had the aspect of a man accustomed to giving orders.

"You've a passenger aboard, captain—his name is Mr. Hatton."

"No Hatton with me this trip, sir," said Goodwin. "I only had three passengers to begin with, and two of 'em were buried at sea two days ago."

The big man was aghast.

"Dead!" he exclaimed. "You mean that Mr. Hatton died on his way down from Manila?"

"Never had your Mr. Hatton aboard, sir. There's only one passenger of the three left—Mr. Denison. And he's in the saloon in charge of the police. I doubt if he's the man you're looking for, sir. He's being held on some sort of charge in connection with the murders."

"Murders!" boomed the big fellow. "My word!"

He took off his straw hat and wiped his face.

"But about Hatton—I had advices he was sailing with you, and I don't understand."

He turned and looked up and down the saloon-deck, as if he doubted the captain's word and expected to see Hatton walking around.

"I'm sure there's something wrong," he went on hastily. "Not only did I get a letter saying Hatton was coming with you, but I got a cable yesterday from Singapore, sent up by the mail-steamer, that Hatton had actually sailed in the *Maori Chief* and that I should meet him!"

"Looks as if somebody has made a mistake," said Goodwin.

"What did you say the names of your other two passengers were—the two you buried at sea?"

"Rollais and Engstrom. One was a planter's son, and the other has a business in Sydney, so——"

"Those names mean nothing to me," broke in the big man.

He seemed suddenly relieved, though he was still puzzled.

"I'd better go below—I—I need a drink. This thing has graveled me!"

And he disappeared into the social-hall, bound for the saloon.

"He thinks I can deliver passengers I've never had," grumbled Goodwin to Mr. John.

As the captain turned to go back to his cabin, he heard an excited yell from below, followed by noisy conversation. The voice of the big man in white boomed over the others. And then Inspector Swift popped up the stairs.

"Captain, send below that mate of yours—Mr. John. I'd like to have a few words with him."

"Mr. John? Why, what's he wanted for?" asked Goodwin.

"Send him and come yourself, skipper," advised the officer, and returned to the saloon.

Mr. John, his blue eyes staring in apprehension, followed the captain below. They saw Denison sitting at the table between Swift and the big stranger, and all of them looked serious and worried.

"Mr. John," began Inspector Swift in his most official tone, "I understand that you spent some time in prison in Saigon—served a sentence for robbery."

"In prison!" cried the astounded Captain Goodwin. "My mate in prison for robbery! Why, what's this all about?"

And he swung round and stared at the mate.

Mr. John was much confused. He swallowed hard, wet his lips with his tongue, and his bronzed face reddened. He made several attempts to speak, spluttered something which nobody understood, and turned as if to run up the stairs.

"Wait!" cried the skipper. "We've got to get to the bottom of this!"

Mr. John reluctantly swung back and faced the table.

"I want an answer," said Swift.

"Who tell you that?" demanded the mate.

"Never mind who told me. Do you deny that you were in prison?"

"Not any times I be in Saigon, sir! Other places, yes, I been in jail—when I was young—maybe a little too drunk, but——"

"Oh, that's all right," grinned Swift. "I'm not trying to arrest you for your ancient sins. But this murder case——"

Mr. John lifted a ponderous paw and shook it at Denison.

"For this, you——"

"Never mind that!" snapped Swift. "I want to ask you if you had any talks with Mr. Rollais, one of the men who was killed. Did you know him?"

"I never spik at him!" raged Mr. John. "What the —— I want to spik with that dude——?"

"I object to this!" roared Captain Goodwin. "Mr. John has been with me, boy and man, for years. I picked him up in Vladivostok as a cabin-boy more than twenty years ago, and he's been with me since.

And a good man he is, too. He worked hard and studied hard and I helped him to get his mate's ticket——"

"That's all right, captain," broke in Swift. "Your Mr. John is safe enough. I know fairly well who's to blame in this case."

And turning to Denison, the inspector went on:

"You see, Rollais was not telling you the truth. He thought that if he led you to believe he had a confederate, it would be easier to argue you into helping him with his robbery, so——"

"Get this man Denison out of my ship!" bawled Captain Goodwin. "I've had enough of his lies, and now I won't have him bringing charges against my mate! Now, I——"

"Don't be too sure what you're talking about," commanded Swift.

"I'm sure enough of what I'm talking about," retorted Goodwin angrily.

Then, his rage increasing, he leaned across the table and shook a fist under Denison's nose.

"You're the criminal! You tried to fool me by putting a lot of waste paper in packages in my safe! But I looked through 'em, and then I knew you weren't to be trusted. After that, I had my Chinese steward investigate your luggage, and he found that your big bag under your berth had a chain coming through the leather of the bottom, and the chain locked to an angle-iron!"

He swung back to Swift.

"This man robbed either Rollais or Engstrom and the evidence against him is in his cabin—in his bag! The Manila police knew he was a crook!"

The big man beside Denison broke out in laughter.

"You're on the wrong course, skipper. Can't blame you much, but you've been carrying a passenger with a lot of cash. I'm George Cumberlee, and I'm buying the Floating Garden Island. Mr. Hatton here, is the son of my partner, and before he left Manila he fixed it with the police so he'd be regarded by your other passengers as a suspicious character for his own protection. Being on the passenger list under the name of Denison, the two crooks who sailed to rob him, never dreamed he was the man with the money. So he got through safely with four hundred thousand dollars."

# REPTILE SUPERSTITIONS

### *by* Eugene Cunningham

THE tropics are usually thought aswarm with reptiles and, within certain limits, there are more of the tribe in the south than in temperate climates. Given a liberal allowance of snakes, plus a primitive people, and superstitions seem inevitable.

In Costa Rica, for instance, everything that crawls legless is first a *culebra*, a snake, next a *toboba*, a venomous particular species. The wriggler may be utterly harmless but the peon shrieks "*Toboba!*" and either smashes it with a convenient stick or takes to his heels. Many and wonderful are the snake stories of the native. It is said that whole families have been wiped out, as they labored to hack a little farm from virgin jungle.

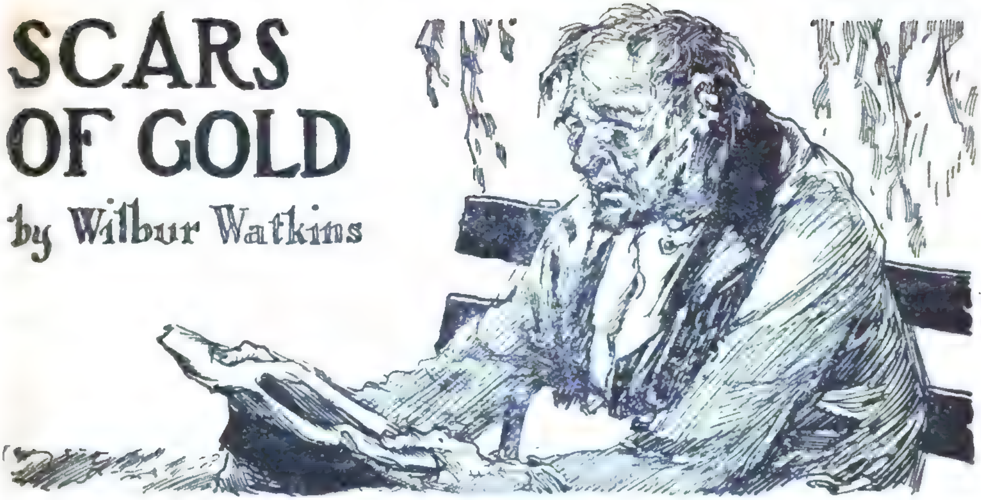
In Salvador a thick brown constrictor, popularly-named the *massacuata*, is the "house-snake" of the poor. Usually, this specimen haunts the poles beneath roof-tiles or thatch during the day, though the unaccustomed voyager may be interested to observe one or two dozing in the *hamaca*, or beneath the bench, so hospitably indicated by the host's gesture. The *massacuata* is credited by the *Salvadoreño* with almost human intelligence. If the woman of the house chances to be nursing a child, the *massacuata*, after night fall, slides down and into the bed, pushes aside the infant and itself suckles!

"But observe!" shouts the indignant native when doubt is indicated of this page from natural history. "Look about in this land and count the poor, thin babies. That is proof!"

"But observe!" the practical *Americano* may say to himself. "Look about in this land and count the mothers who, each time the infant frets, cram into its defenseless mouth a couple of pounds of *duke*—crude brown sugar. Think in terms of diet!"

# SCARS OF GOLD

## by Wilbur Watkins



*Author of "Cassiar Gold," "Cheechako Luck," etc.*

THE mere sight of him would have moved a heart of stone to either deepest pity or to utter disgust. I doubt if all the ranks of trampdom could produce a more "lousy-looking" specimen of a "bo." Dirty of skin, with filthy clothing sagging in folds from his lean body, and feet half-bare in worn-out shoes, he sat in the cool of evening, on a bench in the little green park in the busy downtown section of the Southern California city, and told to a circle of curious listeners how he came by the scars that rendered his face a hideous caricature of a human countenance.

His right cheek was a mass of scars—great livid welts cutting through a thin stubble of gray beard from the point of his chin to the back of his head—the mark of deep wounds that had healed without a doctor's care. His right ear was divided into three separate sections that drooped down and flapped about when he moved his head.

The story he told was a harrowing one of a hand-to-hand encounter with a polar bear on an ice-floe in the frozen North.

"—and with only one shell left in my forty-five, I jammed the muzzle into his neck close up to his shoulders and pulled the trigger. He died with my whole head in his mouth, and the brand of his teeth on my face," the derelict finished.

Then off came his battered hat and he held it out with a most appealing look in his bleary eyes.

The tall old man at my side dropped a generous handful of silver into the hat and turned away, muttering to himself:

"Liar! Rotten old liar!"

I scrutinized him closely; surprized, first, at his doubting the story which to me had the ring of truth, and then, that a man of his age and appearance should even deign listen to the words of a ragged old bum.

From the snowy whiteness of his closely clipped mustache and the rim of hair visible beneath his dark felt hat, I judged this old gentleman to be well past the sixty mark. And from the appearance of his person—erect, light of step, clad in expensive modish clothing, with the glow of health in his wrinkled face, and a general air of satisfaction with himself and with life as he found it, I mentally put him down as one of the city's wealthy and influential citizens.

His accusing words had aroused my curiosity, and encouraged by a genial look in his gray eyes, I asked of him:

"Why do you doubt that story? The man certainly has the teeth marks to prove it."

"Huh! teeth marks!" he snorted. "No teeth ever did that. It was gold, shot gold that carved that old liar's face."

When I begged for details he drew a thin gold watch from a pocket of his vest, glanced at it—there was yet an hour of daylight—and said that he didn't mind obliging me. So we sat down on a stone bench in the shadow of a palm, the gray-haired one lighted a fat brown cigar, and along with his slow puffs of smoke I learned much of the past history of the dirty old fellow with the mutilated face.

BILL HULL, shift boss at the Mammoth Mine in the Coldfoot diggings, was a good miner and a very hard worker, in spite of the fact that he was a handsome fellow—and knew it. It was this knowledge, no doubt, that prompted him to work so hard. He wanted to lay up a sufficient "stake" to enable him to return to the white lights of city boulevards where he felt that his manly beauty would be more appreciated.

Though he always drew top wages in any camp that he worked in during the busy months of Summer, the money slipped through his fingers in the dance halls and gambling dives of the Yukon towns, and each Spring found Hull back on the job broke. He arrived at the age of thirty-five no nearer to that "stake" than when he came North ten years before. But his greed for riches had steadily increased until it prompted him to employ his inventive genius in rigging up a trap in the Mammoth Company's line of sluice to steal the company's gold.

Hull with a crew of half a dozen men was sent in early that Spring to get things in shape for the work to open as soon as the water ran in Big Squaw Creek. The Mammoth Company was the only big outfit operating on that stream. Their ground lay about fifteen miles out of Coldfoot, the little log-cabin placer-camp at the head of steamboat navigation on the Koyukuk River.

They mushed in from Tanana over the Winter trail—a hundred and twenty miles of frozen lakes and sloughs, and timbered flat-lands and high barren slopes of the Koyukuk Hills. All that way Hull carried in the pocket of his parka the ingenious device that he believed would earn for him the fortune that he craved. It appeared to be nothing more than a thin, flat piece of steel about eight inches square such as are commonly used to patch knot-holes and worn places on the inside of a line of sluice.

Arrived at the camp he found opportunity to put his trap in place. Between two rows of riffle-blocks near the head of the sluice where the heaviest particles of gold would lodge, he cut a slot through the bottom planks and over it nailed his sheet of steel, apparently no different from the score of other patches scattered over the inside of the forty feet of sluice. Only a very close inspection—so neatly had the work been done—would have revealed the fact that Hull's patch had a moveable section in the middle of it, a strip an inch wide and six inches long balanced near its middle on a pin attached to the under side, and resting directly over the hole that he had cut through the bottom plank.

When the rows of riffle-blocks, eight-inch sections of six-inch square timbers, were set in place with an inch of space between rows to catch the gold, a downward poke with a short stick between the fourth and fifth rows, would bring the moveable piece of Hull's patch into an upright position leaving a hole through the bottom of the box on each side of it. In the same manner it could be closed again before the blocks were removed for the weekly clean-up.

Underneath the box, directly below his trap, Hull placed an old steel pan. When the heap of boulders that braced the sides of the head section of sluice was in place the pan was shielded from any chance of discovery, and the water that would escape through the trap would not be noticed as the ground around was continually drenched by foam and spray when the muddy torrent raced through the boxes.

The April sun drove the snow from the steep, timbered hillsides that frowned on the cluster of cabins in the narrow basin of Squaw Creek. A stream of water yellow with color leached from the caribou moss, filled the company's ditch and poured into the big penstock on the hillside high above the camp, and the long, low-roofed, log bunkhouse rapidly filled with men, trappers and prospectors from the surrounding hills and miners mushed in from the Yukon—all looking for a season of work.

The camp opened with a crew of thirty men working two twelve-hour shifts, and with a battery of six "giants" shooting powerful jets of water from three-inch nozzles against the twelve foot "face" of frozen gravel, undermining it, tearing it down, forcing it with unceasing, grinding roar into the line of sluice.

They were working in exceptionally high-grade ground that year, so the principal owner of the company — sawed-off, red-muzzled, sour-tempered old Chris Hendricks, with either the stem of a black pipe or a string of curses always between his teeth—bossed the job in person. Pete DeKorts, a big, lazy, red-faced Hollander who worked through the Summer only that he might idle the Winter away with plenty of bad whisky and stud poker, ran the night shift. His only qualification for the job was that he and Chris had at one time been prospecting partners. Personally they had scant use for each other.

The boss of the day shift and the real driving power of the camp that year was Bill Hull. It seemed that he never slept. He supervised every clean-up—with his own hands removed the riffle-blocks at the head of the sluice and placed them back again. He was a "slave driver" of the most obnoxious order to the wage slaves that toiled under him. When off shift he made a daily trip far up the creek to inspect the ditch where it crossed the buried glacier, a place where the previous year a break in the bank had caused a wash-out that closed the work for a month. He also personally saw that the penstock and the line of steel pipe bringing the water under pressure to the giants were kept in good repair.

"Bill's hoppin' around this season like a chicken with its head cut off. You'd think he owned the snap," Pete DeKorts sarcastically observed to Chris one day.

The boss took the gnawed stem of his stinking pipe from between his lips long enough to reply significantly—

"Only wish I had a night boss with half his get-up and go!"

THE last man to apply for work in the Coldfoot diggings that year was old Joe Bowman. He came in over the Winter trail after it was supposed to be impassible—across those weary miles of rotting ice on lakes and sloughs, floundering through the deep water-soaked moss on barren hillsides—a trip that only a stranger in the North would have attempted, due not only to the difficulty and the danger at that time of year, but also to the fact that jobs in Coldfoot diggings where they paid ten dollars per day for "shovel stiffs," were always filled long before the work was ready to open.

Bowman came through, however and asked Chris Hendricks for a job. The boss had just finished his dinner and stepped out through the mess-house door. He turned an appraising glance on the forlorn looking stranger, noted his gaunt face with its drooping gray mustache and month's growth of beard, and his clothing and the slender pack on his back that the dense brush, on detours he had taken around open water, had torn to rags. He appeared considerably more than half-starved, and leaned with one hand against the log wall as if to keep from falling down.

"You're a month too late, stranger," Chris finally snorted in his usual surly tone; "and besides I don't work scarecrows nohow. Go in and eat."

Had he been struck on the head with a pick-handle the newcomer could have looked no more sick and hurt. His head sagged dejectedly and his gaunt body slumped back against the logs.

"It ain't for me alone," he half-whined as Chris turned away. "I'm broke and starved, but it ain't just for me that I got to work and earn some money—it's for my baby, too."

The boss wheeled sharply around

"Baby! The —— you say! Where you got it—in that ragged pack!"

Then Bowman spilled out a hard-luck story of failure down in the States; how the duplicity of friends in whom he had trusted had reduced him to the necessity of working for wages, and at the same time instilled in his soul an utter disgust for the ways of civilization. With his only dependent, a twelve-year-old son, he had headed into the North, figuring that in this land of high wages he still had strength enough in his body to earn for his boy a start in life. On the steamboat coming up the Yukon a talkative acquaintance had assured him that a man could always find work in this camp. So he had left the boy in the care of an Indian family at Tanana, and had hoofed in to Coldfoot and he simply had to have work.

"That Indian said if I didn't send some money pretty quick he'd feed my boy to his dogs," Joe aded pitifully.

With Alaskan frankness Chris "cussed" him out as a weak-headed old fool for bringing a kid into such a country, and closed his observations with the remark that Bowman was welcome to a bed in the bunkhouse and a place at the table and, after he had rested up for a few days, he would think the job proposition over.

At the end of a week Joe went to work

under Bill Hull on the day-shift. He was put in a wheel-barrow gang, moving a neck of gravel from below the head of the sluice where the giants could not reach it. In the blaze of the sun which at that season never set, tortured by clouds of blood-sucking insects, he toiled with pick and shovel for twelve long hours each day. And in that crew of burly huskies, most of them with the strength of a mule and tough as seasoned tamarack, this lank Cheechako held up his end and moved as much gravel as any other one. But that did not save him from the abuse and ridicule of the day-shift boss.

For no apparent reason other than the usual contempt of a "sourdough" for a "cheechalker," Hull disliked the old man from the first. He dubbed him "grandad" and a "—— old duffer" and on many occasions when speaking to him used as profane epithets as he would have used on a dog.

Chris, coming on to the works one hot morning, and observing Joe down in the pit heaving on his shovel to fill his barrow as quickly as the rest, stepped up behind him and growled in an undertone:

"Take it easy, youngster; you'll bust yourself in two. You needn't fill that full every time."

But when he dumped the load into the sluice-box Hull bawled out in a voice that carried a mile—

"Fill that buggy full next time, you old loafer, or I'll send you down-river talkin' to yourself!"

Joe didn't understand Chris. He feared and hated Hull; and lived in constant fear of losing his job. This weight of worry and the killing pace at which he worked would, no doubt before the Summer closed, have landed him in a permanent berth among the score of little moss-covered mounds on the hillside, had not a different misfortune intervened.

Joe had drawn two months' pay. There were yet six weeks before the camp would close. But night had returned again, and the lengthening hours of darkness would soon necessitate laying off the night-shift. He was afraid that one of these men might be given his place, so he worked harder than ever to make a good showing before Hull. He knew that if he could hang on to the close of the season he would have enough money to keep his boy and himself through the Winter, or perhaps enough to take them out of this horrible country and down to the States once more.

One morning as he toiled in the pit, the glancing blow of a pick in the hands of a fellow-worker cut a deep gash in the side of Joe's left foot.

ASIA
ARCTIC
OCEAN
BERING STRAIT
KOTZEBUE SOUND
ENDICOTT RANGE
FORT YUKON
ARCTIC CIRCLE
NOME
ST LAWRENCE ISLAND
NORTON
YUKON RIVER
CIRCLE CITY
KLONDIKE REGION
CANADA
TANANA RIVER
ALASKA RANGE
MT. MCKINLEY
CHUGACH
YUKON
BERING SEA
ALEUTIAN RANGE
BRISTOL BAY
KODIAK ISLAND
PACIFIC OCEAN
SITKA
DOUGLAS
SCALE

He was carried into the bunkhouse, where one of the men dressed the injury, while Chris stood looking on.

"You'll be plumb lucky if you stand on that peg again inside a month," the man informed him when the dressing was in place.

In utter physical and mental agony, Joe protested that he would be all right much sooner than that.

"I'm pretty tough," he declared. "Cuts always did heal quick on me. I got to get in a few more weeks' work."

Chris had viewed the protruding bones of the injured man's body when his clothing was removed, and he now took the pipe from his lips and spoke with brutal gruffness:

"You old fool, you don't know how lucky you are! Stay there till the camp closes for all of me. You've done a season's work—your pay will go on just the same."

He stamped from the room with Bowman staring after him—in his eyes the surprized look of a spirit-broken dog that has been cheated out of its accustomed kick. He figured that at last he was beginning to understand his surly boss.

When Joe was up once more, hobbling about on a spruce-sapling crutch, Chris called him into his cabin one day and made him the proposition that he remain there during the Winter as watchman over the property at the same wages he was then drawing.

" 'Red' Ward stayed here the last two Winters," Chris explained; "but he knows how to trap and I reckon it'll do him good to shift for himself a while. A soft job like this might spoil him in time."

Bowman shook his head.

"I'm obliged for the offer but I can't take it up. I got to be with my boy."

"You got to make a living for that boy and you can't do that down on the Yukon. Now this is what I'll do: You stay here as I said, and when I do go down I'll have the kid sent to Fairbanks and put in school there where he belongs. Maybe next year he can come up here with you."

That suited Joe just right and he tried to voice his gratitude and appreciation, but Chris wouldn't listen.

"You'll find it pretty lonesome, because there ain't nothing to keep you busy," he went on; "all you got to do is see that no Indian trappers snoop around and swipe something, and that nobody does any sniping around the head of the sluice. There's always considerable gold concentrated in the gravel there and a man could pan out a heap of it in no time."

Joe swore that no camp in Alaska would have a more vigilant watchman than the one at the Mammoth Mine.

AS THE end of the season drew near, Hull came out with the announcement at the breakfast-table one morning that this would be his last year in the North.

"I got word early this Spring of the death of an uncle of mine who has made a pile in the oil game," he declared. "I haven't ever seen the old bird, but I'm one of his principal heirs anyway. The estate is to be settled this Fall, and I'll pull down enough to put me on 'Easy Street' the rest of my days."

From across the table Pete stared at him with a suspicious gleam in his pale eyes. He swallowed a mouthful of flapjack and then spoke up in a tone audible throughout the length of the long table—

"Then what you been workin' for this Summer like as if this was the only job in the world—drivin' the rest of the boys like a bunch of buck niggers?"

"I figure on earning my pay wherever I work, which is a heap more than anybody can say of you," Hull retorted.

After a moment of silence Pete reached into a pocket and drew out a fair-sized nugget which he held up between thumb and forefinger.

"Look here, boys," he commanded. "This measley little hunk is all the gold that I've been able to snipe this Summer, while Bill here talks of makin' a trip outside. Well, my hat's off to him—he's a blamed sight better sniper than I am!"

He laughed boisterously at his own joke, and the whole table followed suit, with the exception of Hull. With face turned flaming red under its coat of tan, and black eyes ablaze with fury, he sprang up, ran around the end of the table, siezed Pete by his shirt-collar and tumbled him backward in a heap on the floor.

"You fat-headed pig!" he cried, standing over him with threatening doubled fists. "I'm no thief! I haven't touched a grain of gold that didn't belong to me! Now crawl up on your prayer bones and eat that dirty slur!"

Pete lost no time in mumbling an apology—declared that he was just joking, didn't mean anything by it. But after Hull had left the room and Pete had returned to his place at the table, he whispered to the man beside him:

"Poked him in a tender place, didn't I. From the way he blazed up I got a hunch I hit the nail slap on the head."

When the crisp, frosty night of Autumn had reduced the water in Big Squaw Creek to a rivulet that could not fill the sluice, the work closed down. The men were paid off and they lit out for Coldfoot to take the little Koyukuk River steamer that was due to leave next day on its last down-river trip to the Yukon.

Chris bade Joe "so long" and, with his personal effects and the dunnage of the men, rode down over the winding, rocky trail on one of the supply wagons drawn by a team of lean mules. Until late in the afternoon of that last day Bill Hull busied himself about the camp seeing that tools and all movable equipment were put away in the store-house and everything placed in proper shape for the Winter. All of the other men had gone before he finally took the trail toward Coldfoot.

The camp was deserted except for Joe Bowman. He had taken up his quarters in Chris Hendrick's den, a snug, one-room cabin with a door in each end, a window in each side, a big stove in one corner, a soft bunk in another, an arm-chair and table and cooking utensils. He would be very comfortable there through the cold months ahead, but the silence that had closed down when the water no longer roared through the sluice weighed heavily on his nerves, and set him wondering how he would stand the quiet solitude of the long cold days to come.

Darkness had settled in the narrow valley by the time he had finished his evening meal. He washed and put away the dishes, and as he emptied the pan of dish-water out into the yard, he paused a moment in the open doorway to watch the red rim of the full moon slowly rise above a timbered ridge far up-stream. As he stood there the silence that he already dreaded was suddenly broken. From the direction of the sluice boxes some three hundred yards up the creek came the sharp crash of a falling boulder.

Instantly Joe was all ears. The sound was not repeated. But his imagination was feeding ravenously on the words of his boss—

"Don't let any snipers pan at the head of the sluice."

Although unable to figure out what a sniper could hope to accomplish out there in the dim moonlight, his mind was strong in the conviction that some one was on the premises who had no right to be there.

"Boulders don't bounce around all by themselves," he argued, and sat down to replace quickly his hob-nailed boots with a pair of old moccasins that Chris had left.

The only weapon in the room was a big, old ten-gage shotgun covered with rust and dust, hanging from a nail in the wall. He found a willow cleaning-rod, ran a rag through the barrels and loaded them from a half-empty box of brass shells. Then extinguishing the lantern on the table he quietly slipped out through the rear door.

With utmost silence Joe crossed the bed of the creek, moved up through the willows on the opposite bank until well above the line of sluice, and then recrossing into the dense shadow of the perpendicular face of gravel, he crept cautiously forward until within twenty feet of the upper end of the line of boxes.

The head-box, and the dark figure of the man diligently removing the heap of boulders that banked the outer side of it, were in the full rays of the moon. For several moments Joe watched him lift the rocks and place them down again a few feet away, very careful that no more of them should slip and crash together. Totally unable to figure out the object of this labor, he watched and waited until the mysterious worker had removed the boulders down to the solid gravel. Then stooping, and tugging, the man drew a heavy object from beneath the box.

At that same instant, with a clatter of gravel beneath his feet, a second figure suddenly reared up from behind a huge boulder in the bed of the creek close beside the narrow stream, and within ten feet of where the first had piled his rocks.

"Uh-huh! I sure had you figured right! You're just as —— crooked as I am! Well, you can count me in on that inheritance of yours, Hull!"

The voice was that of the red-faced boss of the night-shift. The moonlight glinted on the pistol-barrel held ready in his hand.

In hushed voice Hull answered with a bitter oath, and—

"You sneakin' Dutch hog——"

"You ain't got no say a-comin' in this deal!" Pete shut him up. "I'll do the talkin' and you better do some mighty close listenin'. I got you covered, and just one squawk from me will bring the old man here to help. You're caught red-handed—liable to a long term in McNeil's Island. But I'm willing to act white about this. There's gold enough in that pan to set us both up proper. All I want is my half of it."

Hull's rage and disappointment were evidently too deep and bitter to permit words just then. As he returned no reply Pete demanded—

"Well, choose—half of this or none with a term in the pen to boot."

"Choose! You dirty thief! I ain't got any choice. Take your half!"

"Now remember, that's a bargain," Pete cautioned. "We've got to work together on this. If you try any crooked work it'll queer the deal for both of us and you'll be the heaviest loser."

"Dry up! I said I'd split it with you, but I hope to —— our trails cross some time in the future!"

Pete slipped his gun into a side-pocket of his mackinaw coat and approached Hull. They emptied the pan, three-fourths full of coarse particles of gold, into a canvas sack.

"My ——!" Pete breathed when he

hefted the sack. "Wont I step some when I reach 'Frisco!"

Out from the shadow of the gravel bank stepped Joe Bowman with the shotgun held to his shoulder by hands that trembled like wind-whipped leaves.

"Throw down your guns! Stick up your hands—or I'll blow the heads off both of you!"

The muzzle of the shotgun wavering from one to the other was an argument they could not answer. Each dropped a pistol on the gravel and raised his hands.

"Tough luck, Bill; looks like you'd have to split your inheritance three ways now," Pete observed sourly.

"Turn that blunderbuss the other way, you old fool, 'fore you tremble it off and hurt somebody. I'm ready to talk business. What's your proposition?" Hull demanded.

Joe indeed was trembling violently from the excitement of the encounter and the full realization of the great responsibility that his job had so unexpectedly imposed upon him. He was utterly incapable of coherent thought other than that he must get possession of the gold. In a voice that quavered, despite his effort to make it sound harsh and commanding, he directed Pete to shoulder the sack of gold.

"Hold on there! You ain't going to get away with all that dust!" Hull expostulated. "How much of a rake-off do you expect?"

The muzzle of the shotgun swung over to stare him in the eyes scarce six feet away.

"Never you mind! You face about and get your legs moving alongside of Pete. If there's any dickering done it will be after this gold is safe inside my cabin."

Down to the cabin they marched. The sack was tossed on to the floor, and Joe made his proposition:

"There she stays. There ain't a grain of gold going out of this shack 'till Chris Hendricks takes it out."

He seemed to think that that definitely settled the matter, and not knowing what other disposition to make of his prisoners, and eager to be rid of their presence, he threatened that if they didn't clear out at once he would have them sent to jail.

Not until the door had slammed behind Hull's black, scowling face and he had heard their foot-beats racing back toward the sluice, did Joe remember that in the excitement of the moment he had completely forgotten to pick up their revolvers.

Panic seized upon him as, afraid to light the lantern, he crouched in the darkened cabin, and reasoned out that these two thieves would certainly make an effort to regain the fortune of which he had despoiled them. This gold, belonging to the man who had befriended him, he must defend at any cost, but the odds were heavy against him. The men outside were well armed while he had only a shotgun loaded with bird-shot.

He trembled at the thought that he might have to kill them, and then again at the doubt that with only bird-shot he might not be able to kill them. He must have a heavier load for the gun. The gold would do. He poured a handful of it into each barrel. Then fumbling in the darkness along the wall he found the willow cleaning-rod and with this tamped on top of the gold a wad of paper torn from a strip of bacon.

"There!" he muttered when the job was done; "if it don't burst the gun, that's charge enough to tear a man's whole head off!"

MANY moments of agonized suspense followed for old Joe as he crouched beside his bunk in a far corner of the dark cabin with his overloaded shotgun grasped in his hands. Of the two windows, one facing the hillside was as black as the wall itself, but the other was bright with the moon rays that streamed through it in a path of light across the floor. Joe knew that his greatest danger lurked in the darkened window, so he kept his eyes fastened upon it—and listened, and waited.

His suspense was broken at last by the sound of cautious footsteps outside. The sounds moved past the front of the cabin to the moonlit side, and soon he heard a low rapping on the window frame, followed by the hushed voice of Pete DeKorts:

"Oh, Joe! Listen! I got something to tell you."

"What is it?"

Pete's big head darkened the square of light and with lips close to the glass he whispered:

"Listen, Joe—I didn't have a thing to do with stealin' that gold. I lingered back here just to see what Hull was up to—it was just a hunch of mine. I got there just a second before you came. I'm on the square, Joe, I promise you that. I've always been on the square with everybody, and all I want now is to get out of this mix-up with clean hands and to help you get out with a whole hide. Hull is ravin' around like a lunatic up there in the bunkhouse—just now hinted that we'd have to bump you off—get you out of the way. I said I washed my hands of the whole deal and was goin' to town. He made me promise that I'd keep my mouth shut 'fore he'd let me go. Can you hear, Joe?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm plumb certain that Hull intends to kill you, if necessary, to get that gold, and if I kept my promise to him I'd feel in a way responsible for not letting you know this, and not tryin' to help you, as I will if you'll promise not to try to hang anything on me after the deal is over. Will you promise me that, Joe?"

"Sure I will, Pete. You were willing enough to take half of it, but I know you had no hand in stealing it, so I'll clear you if you'll give me a little help now."

"I'll bust a tug to help just to prove I'm on the square! Now this is what we better do——"

He broke off abruptly and seemed to be listening. Then in a still lower whisper:

"Hull is standing in the bunkhouse door. Come closer, Joe—he mustn't hear me talkin' to you."

After the hour of painful anxiety just passed Joe was more than eager to grasp at help of any kind. He could readily understand how any sane man would revolt at the thought of taking part in a cold-blooded murder, regardless of the wealth that it might bring to him. So it never occurred to his agitated mind to question the sincerity of the other man's words. With the shotgun in his hands he rose and moved toward the lighted window. He stepped into the path of light.

Through a pane in the darkened window there stabbed a tongue of flame. The shock of a bullet against his skull knocked Joe, dazed and bleeding, face down on the floor. Then as in a dream he heard the exultant voice of Hull above him:

"Not so bad, Pete, for a pot-shot in the dark! I drilled the old crow smack through the dome!"

When full consciousness returned to Joe, although suffering intense agony from the wound in his head, he continued to lie motionless, believing that the whole top of his head had been blown away, and that he was surely dying. And in that blackest hour of his life, above the torture of physical pain, above all fear and dread of death, the thing that burned with sharpest misery in Joe's soul was the thought that he had failed in his duty to his son.

He had wronged the only living creature that loved him. His life had belonged solely to his boy, and now he had given it to defend the gold of a man who did not need it, who perhaps would never even know of his sacrifice. But if the gold were not taken away he felt sure that Chris' gratitude would be expressed by his caring for the boy, and then Joe's one great object in life would have been attained. If only he could yet save that gold!

Into every fiber of his aching body new life and fresh determination thrilled. He opened his eyes a tiny bit. By the light of the lantern at the table across the room the thieves were dividing their loot. With stiff, half-numb fingers Joe fumbled at the breach of the shotgun beside him and pressed both hammers back. The sharp little click was unheard by the other men. Their gold was roughly divided into two sacks and they were ready to go.

Pete was visibly ill at ease. A great fear of his companion obsessed him—

"Now see here, Bill, you ain't harborin' any hard feelings toward me now, are you?"

"—— no!" Hull retorted. "We can't neither afford to pack a grouch after the way the deal has turned. All that worries me is that blab mouth of yours when you get drunk. If you ever do let it out I'll swear it was you that bumped the old duffer off."

Pete shoved out his big red hand:

"Shake, Bill. I won't never talk, and I swear I'm your friend from here out."

They shook hands, and Hull picked up his sack and turned toward the door—

"Come on, let's clear out."

Summoning every atom of his strength, Joe reared his bloody head up from the floor. He swung his shotgun in a general direction toward the door and gasped hoarsely as he pressed both triggers—

"Take the rest of it!"

With the roar of a cannon the gun belched forth its charge of gold. The recoil flattened Joe once more on the floor, but through the cloud of acrid smoke he saw that his last great effort had failed. Only one of the men was down. Hull lay in a crumpled heap against the wood-box beside the stove. Pete, uninjured, sprang across the room and seized the empty shotgun. Joe closed his eyes and welcomed death.

A faint, pitiful plea for help gurgled from between Hull's blood-streaming lips, drew Pete to the side of the stricken man to whom he had so lately sworn his friendship.

"Help you, Bill! ——, there ain't anybody can help you! The whole blamed side of your head is blowed off and you're bleedin' like a stuck hog!"

He made no effort to conceal the tone of deep satisfaction that was evident in his voice. In fact Pete was an entirely changed man from what he had been but a short moment before. Gone entirely was his nervousness and the look of fear in his eyes. He stared at the mangled head of the wretch at his feet with beaming face, and a smile that broadened until suddenly he broke forth with a boisterous laugh.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" he roared. "I'm just thinkin', Bill, that I'm your sole heir, and all that inheritance will go to me now. And lord, but it's plumb welcome! It'll take me back to the old country, Bill, back to the old mother that I ain't seen for close on thirty years. I'll go like a gentleman, too—the rich Mr. DeKorts from America. Luck has sure busted my way at last! And I owe it all to you and the old man there! So just to prove my gratitude to both of you, I reckon I'd better squeeze your windpipes and get you out of your misery."

Pete enjoyed to the utmost that first moment of realization that Fate had tossed the whole of this fortune into his lap together with the power to forever stop the only mouths that might accuse him. He threw back his head and laughed again—a harsh, taunting sound that seemed to sting the broken man at his feet into unexpected action.

Hull writhed into a half-sitting posture, with blood-soaked shoulders braced against the wood-box, and one hand moved swiftly to the leather holster suspended at his armpit. When Pete looked down again it was to stare into the muzzle of a revolver held in a wavering hand, with the hate-filled eyes of a crazy man behind it.

Only an instant did he stare. There was no time to kick the hand aside. As the laughter died on his lips a bullet *plunked* against his breast and Pete flopped down across his sack of gold as dead as the metal beneath him.

"BUT Bill Hull did not die," I prompted, when the voice of the gray-haired one ceased as if the story ended there.

"No, of course not. Some Indian moose-hunters from the Koyukuk Village returning down the creek, stopped to bum some grub at the camp. They carried word to Coldfoot. Hull lived to serve fifteen years in Federal prison for the murder of Pete DeKorts. He showed up down here in the park about a year ago."

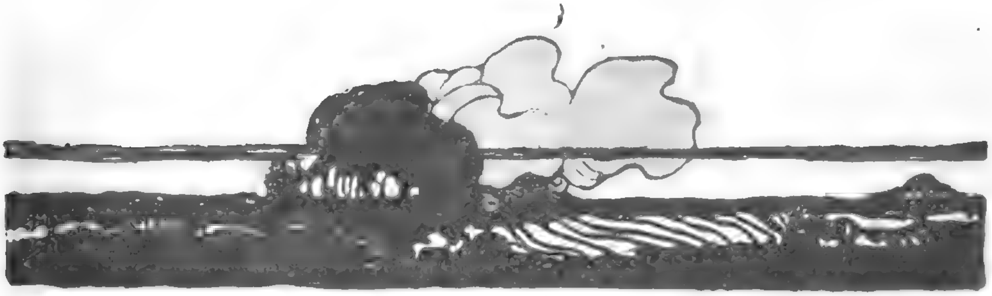
"And did Chris do the square thing by Joe's boy?"

"Well, yes, in a way. But the old man pulled through, too. And Chris wouldn't touch a cent of that gold; declared that Joe had earned it all. It gave him the start he was after."

Then, as if to forestall further questions, he rose abruptly, drew a card from a leather-case, and passed it to me.

My eyes followed him as he moved with sprightly step down the walk between the rows of palm. When his form had blended with the moving throng, I glanced at the card in my hand, the business card of a brokerage firm in the Realty Exchange Building. The name inscribed thereon was

JOSEPH BOWMAN & SON



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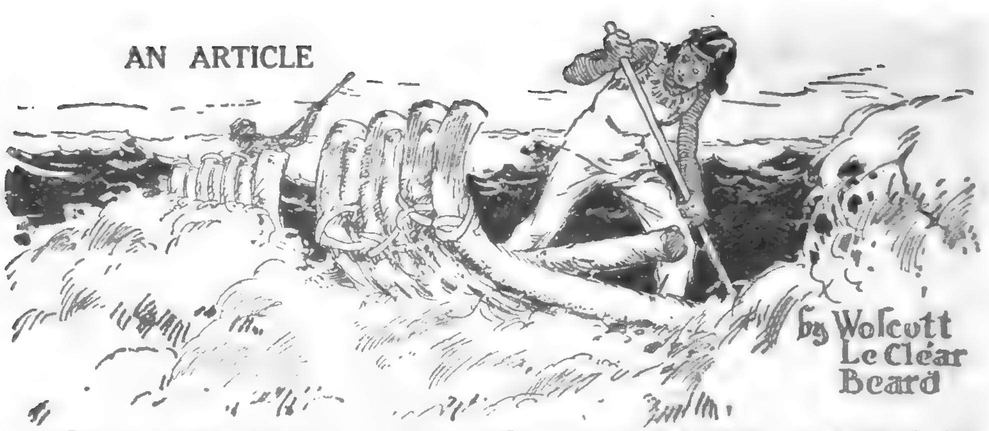

by Wolcott Le Clear Beard

# CERTAIN EXILED GENTLEFOLK

THEY call themselves Lequos—whatever that may mean. They certainly are exiles; their former home in southern Asia is almost as far away from their present habitat, in the very heart of tropical America, as the earth's diameter will permit.

Why this great pilgrimage was attempted and how it was made are questions that perhaps might have been answered without difficulty a decade of centuries ago. Now it is nearly impossible to answer them and soon it must become absolutely so because the Lequo will have vanished, taking his traditions with him and leaving no written records behind. It is a pity that he must go; the Lequo is a gentleman. He possesses all the virtues implied by the strict and ancient definition of that much abused word; also, one is bound in truth to add, he has many of the vices that frequently accompany such virtues.

These facts were made plain to me from our very first meeting. This meeting incidentally was not of a sort that one readily forgets.

The time was a hot, bright Christmas morning. The place, Lat., 15° 18′ S.; Long., 68° 13′ W., in Mapiri, which is the final take-off from civilization in trans-Andean Bolivia. There the expedition under my command for weeks had been stuck hard and fast.

Between Mapiri and the district that we were to explore stretched many hundreds of jungle-covered miles. The only practicable way to cover those miles was by river. No one but the Lequos could ride that river. For the Lequos we therefore were obliged to wait.

I had been spending Christmas Eve with a friend who owned a rubber forest about twelve miles away, when a runner from Mapiri brought word that Lequos at last had appeared. It was hardly past sunrise when I started to return, and I rode fast. But even so I still was some distance away from that mud-and-cane apology for a village when it was borne in upon me by way of my ears that the Yuletide celebration was already under way with an enthusiasm truly astonishing.

Indian flutes were squawking and so were the Indians, who made every sort of disagreeable noise of which the human voice is capable. The racket was punctuated by heavy reports, like the bang of giant firecrackers. As I neared the high wall of the churchyard something that was warm and wet and unpleasant flew over it and slapped my face. Rubbing the spot with my handkerchief, I rode around the last corner.

The village and its inhabitants were now open to my view, but for a moment I had no time to look at them. With a snort my horse violently shied away from an object that lay directly in our path. It took a second glance to identify it; it was the shattered remnant of an Indian. The "firecrackers" I heard were really small sticks of dynamite. This man, filled to the chin with *cañaza*—white rum—had lighted the

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"*Certain Exiled Gentlefolk*," *copyright, 1924, by Wolcott Le Clear Beard.*

long fuse attached to one of those sticks and then, forgetting all about it, stumbled over his own feet and gone to sleep where he fell. It was some portion of his inner economy that had slapped my face as a welcome to the festivities.

Yet the squawking flutes never missed a note, nor was there a howl or shriek the less. Neither did the mayor—a political refugee, and the only educated man domiciled in the town—even glance toward the accident as he ran distractedly to and fro, vainly attempting to maintain something like order. Neither did the town's one policeman as he sat, sullen and scowling, with his bare feet confined by the only pair of stocks I ever saw in active use, in which he had been placed by the mayor's order. Neither did the Lequos, looking on with tolerant amusement as if the entire show had been staged at their behest—which in a sense was the fact.

Never before had I beheld a member of their tribe, but not for an instant was I left in doubt as to which were they. There were thirty of them, dressed in their invariable costume of spotless cotton trousers and shirt. The latter, short, sleeveless and embroidered in bright colors at the neck and armholes, was worn outside like a "middy" blouse, so called. That was all; yet to me it conveyed the impression of a costume suitable, pleasing and even dignified.

The impression was owing, I suppose, to those who wore this costume. Their manner of easy dignity without a trace of "swank," was common to every Lequo I ever knew, and I have known many. Their cheekbones are rather high, but not so high as those of the average Swede; and their skins of course are brown. Despite these facts their thin, well-modeled features reminded me somewhat of old Roman cameos. As for their figures, a bronze Apollo Belvedere might aspire to a form such as theirs if Apollo would take harder and more regular exercise.

Mounted as I was, they naturally caught sight of me at once. So did the mayor, who came hurrying on to the scrubby grass of the village plaza in order properly to introduce us; but without waiting for his Honor's kind offices the Lequo chief approached me with an air of easy cordiality that might be worn by any gentleman who advances to meet another. I swung out of my saddle. We shook hands, and he did not at once release me, but for a little stood looking quizzically into my face; and I embraced the opportunity to make a closer study of his.

He was much shorter than most of his followers, whose average height must have been nearly six feet. His face was as brown and wrinkled as a baked apple; but his white teeth were intact, his eyes bright and every hair on his closely cropped head was as black as if freshly dipped in melted asphalt. His movements were those of a young man. His thin, bare arms seemed to be muscled with small rope.

"My sons; also my grandsons and their sons," he said in very fair Spanish with an introductory wave toward his followers. "We expected to find something like a chief," he went on with a kindly grin that deprived his words of all offense; "but you aren't much more than some man's great-grandson yourself!"

Now I was well over thirty and certainly didn't consider myself open to the charge of extreme immaturity. He saw that I was puzzled and tried to explain. This he found to be difficult on account of our widely differing points of view; but at last I understood, and after all the matter was simple enough. The Lequo system of government is as patriarchal as was that of the Israelites under Abraham. Therefore, according to my informant, no one but the head of a family group could pretend to much authority. He himself, he told me, was eighty-four.

The plaza of Mapiri—a mere stretch of untended common—is surrounded with open-faced houses, like booths with enclosed rooms behind them, built of cane, chinked with clay. Still followed by his stalwart family, the old chief and I were walking toward the one of these houses that I occupied when our ears were struck by a sound that made us all, even the imperturbable Lequos, start and turn toward its source. It was the agonized scream of a woman, first dominating the bawling racket and then stilling it.

Other screams followed the first—and they came from the church. What could have caused them in such a place? Wondering, I, and doubtless many others, would have run to find out; but before we could make a start the woman who had screamed emerged—and it all was plain.

In her arms the woman lugged a wooden

image four feet high. It was the patron saint of Mapiri. I don't recall her name—she was a lady saint—but I knew that image. Not only was it an object of devout veneration, but it was the pride of the village. By means of a popular subscription, which brought forth most of the hoarded coppers in a community where no individual was even moderately rich and most were miserably poor, only recently the image had been newly clothed in ornate and fluffy garments.

But now some overgrateful devotee had placed a votive candle too near those diaphanous skirts—and what a change there was! The frills and furbelows must have flashed up like a train of powder. Around the waist of the image a few half-burned rags showed that its underclothing must also have been of a most inflammable nature; and instead of flowing ringlets only a singed stubble remained on an otherwise bald head.

For a modest saint of the gentler sex such a condition was indeed pitiable—also appallingly indiscreet, for the portions of her person thus exposed weren't by any means on a par with those intended to be seen. But it *was* funny! The anticlimax, after those screams had led us to expect at least murder, made it funnier still.

One of the youngest Lequos giggled. Instantly his great-grandfather whirled and faced him. The old chief spoke no word. He had no occasion to speak; his face was like a book on the Last Judgment, bound in brown crush leather. He pointed, and with hanging head the boy departed toward the Lequo camp by the river.

"He is young, and it is hard to blame him," said the old man to me as his humorous lips twitched in their efforts to suppress a smile. "But," he went on, "that thing, though it looks like an imperfectly picked chicken, is a matter of real grief to these people. Grief can never be a fit subject for mirth, which is a fact that the boy must be taught to remember."

It struck me at the time that as an example of real good breeding—the sort which extends from the marrow out—this would be hard to beat. And I think so still.

That this lad should be punished for his lapse from good manners by being sent back to camp was characteristic of the Lequo discipline, but it should not be inferred that the Lequo nature has any marked trend toward saintliness. It hasn't. This Christmas celebration, for which they were largely responsible, will serve partly to illustrate their ethical point of view and their economic status as well.

AS USUAL the Lequos had come on one of their more or less regular trips from the far, uncharted interior, bringing crude rubber from the widely scattered *gomales* there. Finding upon their arrival that there was a *fiesta* in progress, in their lordly way they "brought the town." That is, they issued instructions that liquor—*cañaza*, for there was no other liquor—should be given, free and in unlimited quantities, to all who desired it. They had behaved like placer miners of our old West who just had made a rich strike; but there was great differences between their position and that of the miners.

There was much pay gravel to be found along smaller streams where the Lequos lived, but never did they touch one of the wooden *bateas* in which that gravel was panned. Virgin rubber forests surrounded their homes, but not an ounce of the gum that they brought was gathered by them. Their work, which no one else dares even to attempt, was the navigation of certain streams. All other work they regarded as beneath them.

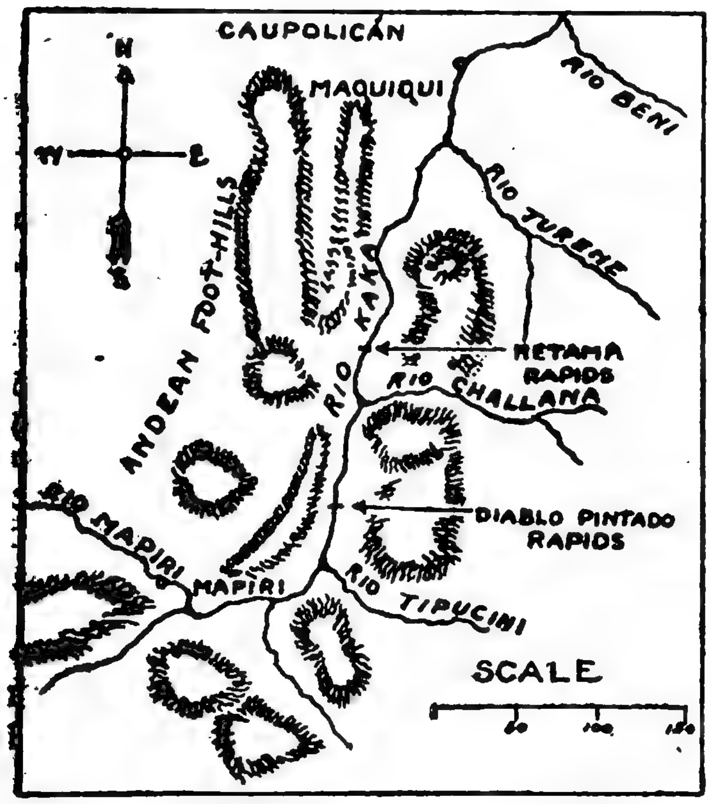
Naturally their wages were high, according to local standards. They ranged from eighty cents in our money to a dollar and ten cents a day; but of this princely pay they rarely or never saw so much as a single real. The trading-companies which bought the rubber were strongly desirous of keeping the Lequos in their debt, and in this desire they were ably seconded by the Lequos themselves.

They—the Lequos—had no wish to soil their aristocratic fingers with debased silver coin. They preferred simply to issue orders for anything that they desired. These orders in extreme cases might be curbed in their scope by patriarchal dictum, but never did the trading-companies dare to refuse obedience. It was upon the good will of the Lequos that the very existence of these companies depended.

Of those who thronged Mapiri that day, there were perhaps four or five white man and a dozen *cholos*—half-breeds. The rest were Indians—Aymará, from the Inter-Andean Plateau. Naturally the Lequos regard all Indians as their inferiors.

Having given orders that these inferiors should be allowed to regale themselves without limit, they, the Lequos, considered their interest and responsibility in the matter to be at an end. If the Indians chose to behave like swine, to blow themselves into fragments or to set their patron saint ablaze—why, that was their affair.

It was not that these superior beings considered drinking to be below their precious dignity. Nothing could be farther from the truth than such a belief. During my talk with the old chief, following this episode of the fiery saint, he consumed virtually two bottles of my Scotch whisky, of which he highly approved; and Heaven knows how much *cañaza* he had taken before that.



The capacity boasted by the "three-bottle men" of old was simply nowhere when compared to that of the old chief and his people. Yet never did I see a Lequo who showed any sign of drunkenness; that indeed would be beneath their dignity.

At the time I wondered greatly at this uncanny ability of theirs. Subsequently I reached the conclusion that it was due in part of generations of practise, but due still more to the lives that their work forced them to lead. It was not until some time after our departure that I began fully to realize the conditions—the terrific physical strain—in which their working hours were spent.

When after our talk I went to inspect the craft that were to carry us on our journey I own that I had a feeling as if my heart had suddenly liquefied and was about to trickle into my boots: It was not by any means the only time that this useful organ was to behave in such a manner before our destination was reached, but it was the first time.

As to the craft themselves, they were like nothing else on earth. They were rafts, but rafts that differed from all others even in the material of which they were made.

This material is called balsa-wood, but the name means nothing; *balsa* is merely the Spanish word for "raft." It is nearly as light and as soft as cork, but more fibrous. The trees, which grow like gigantic weeds, can be raised anywhere in that country by simply clearing off a patch of jungle. Nothing else need be done. No matter what has been growing on that patch, it is balsa-wood that will spring up after it is cleared. Why this is so I can not even guess. But it *is* so; I have tested it.

The logs of this wood are generally six inches or less in diameter. Nine such logs, carefully selected as to length, thickness and proper degree of crookedness, are laid side by side and pinned together with long splinters of a very hard, tough palm, driven through them like nails. Four shorter palm splinters, standing upright, form the legs of a table-like platform of split cane, raised about eighteen inches above the logs. This platform, about three by twelve feet, is intended for the freight. The *balsa* itself is roughly four feet by thirty, its forward end upturned like the toe of a Norwegian ski. It is on account of this upturned end that the logs were selected as to their crooks.

For the purpose of shooting rapids those things seemed about as adequate as the paper boats that children make. I was told, to be sure, that for down-river journeys the *balsas* are formed into *callapos;* that is, they are harnessed three abreast by means of poles that are lashed across them. This fact conveyed some reassurance, but not much. I still was scared. I hope I succeeded in concealing that scare from the old chief, but I'm not nearly so sure of it as I would like to be.

The next day my equipment was stowed and lashed. With great difficulty—for the *fiesta* was still in progress—my men on the following morning were embarked—twenty of them, nearly all drunk. As we went dancing down the Mapiri River my scare for the time was quite forgotten. The experience was pleasant rather than otherwise. It is true that as yet we had not reached the Lequo zone of action, but as yet that fact was numbered among the many things that I had still to learn.

In order to place this zone of action, it must be explained. No published map will do it. The best of such maps show this region as a blank, traversed by a wriggling line, drawn in by guess and labeled with the name of one of the larger rivers. The facts briefly are as follows:

The Mapiri, uniting a dozen tiny confluents, rises in Andean snows and flows in a westerly direction, past the village that bears its name to a point—according to observations necessarily rough but substantially correct—to a point where it is joined by the Tipuani, at Lat., 15° 13′ S.; Long., 67° 55′ W. The united streams form the Kaka, which meanders with loops that are many and wide to its junction with the Tarene, Lat., 13° 47′ S.; Long., 68° 6′ W. Thenceforward it is the Beni, afterward becoming a part of the Madeira, which in turn helps to make up the Amazon. It is on the Kaka that the Lequo's work is done.

That first day's journey down the Mapiri was decidedly comfortable, but our camp that night was anything but that. The Lequos persisted in going on until darkness had almost fallen; and then, contrary to my judgment—contrary to the judgment of any sane person—we made our camp on a scrubby bank so steep that we had to sleep, when we slept at all, in a position nearly upright, with our heels worked into the earth to prevent our sliding into the river.

Worse still, as soon as darkness came there came with it untold legions of small but enthusiastic flies which got into our hair—nowhere else—and bored into our scalps with what felt like red-hot brad-awls. We could neither see nor hear those flies; they worked silently and in darkness. The slightest hint of light was enough to make them call it a day and knock off work, but their industry certainly had earned them a rest by the time they quit. Moreover, they could take a rest. We couldn't.

It was a rather blear-eyed crowd that faced the grinning Lequos at dawn. For they were grinning, every last one of them. A vague suspicion that flashed across my mind caused me to force a sort of grin in return. That effort was of far more value to me than I guessed at the time.

What I suspected was a practical joke, for that the Lequos possessed a sense of humor already had been made manifest. The matter never was mentioned either by them or me, but in the light of later experience I know that my suspicion was correct only in part.

It was a joke—yes. But it also was a try-out; a try-out of me. The others, as subordinates, didn't so much matter; but I was the leader. Therefore the Lequos undoubtedly braved those flies—which must have been peculiar to that spot, for I never met them elsewhere—in order to find out if I, notwithstanding my tender years, would not only come up smiling myself after a night of discomfort so keen that it amounted to torture, but could exercise authority sufficient to force my men also to endure it without mutiny.

As a matter of fact there was no attempt at anything like mutiny, and I had luckily passed the ordeal without knowing that any ordeal was intended. But the Lequos were not without good cause for their conduct. There was vital reason why discipline should be maintained. This I soon was to learn; we reached the Kaka.

Properly to describe this river is impossible. The Whirlpool Rapids below Niagara offer the most familiar example, but it is a very inadequate one.

Perhaps the best way to give some notion of what that water is like is to begin with a swift little brook, such as poets, real and would-be, from Tennyson downward, loved to write about. To such a brook they were fond of applying certain adjectives. Of these "rippling" is an easy winner with "babbling" a fair second, while "dimpling" is a good bet to show and "boiling" is a little ahead of the ruck, Very well. The Kaka does all those things.

Imagine a brook that has been enlarged by so many diameters that the grass-blades growing on its banks become towering trees. A brook full three-quarters of a mile in width, and rushing at the rate of a railway train. Its ripples are often thirty feet high, and sometimes more—much more—while the pebbles that cause them are the size of a small house. When the Kaka "babbles" it sings a duet, the treble of which is shouted by the rushing water, while great boulders, rolling and tumbling over each other as they are hurried along the bottom by that mighty current, rumble forth a thunderous bass.

Moreover, of the two parts this bass is frequently the louder, though the stream is deep enough to float a battleship.

In the kind of brooks infested by poets we all have seen "dimples"—dainty little whirlpools that form and vanish—and also its "boiling" when water for a moment is forced upward from below. In the Kaka these whirlpools are fifty yards in diameter, and the "dimples" in their centers would easily accommodate a hogshead without touching it. When it "boils" the pile of tumbling water is usually as big as four or five hogsheads.

WE CAMPED early at the junction of the Mapiri and Tipuani Rivers in order that the Lequos might give our rafts a last overhauling before the real journey began. It was here, I remember, that a singularly fortunate chance enabled me to become better acquainted with these new friends than could have been accomplished by years of ordinary association.

Just after the evening meal I went from my camp to that of the Lequos to arrange some trivial detail concerning our start in the morning. Just before reaching them I stopped and for a little stood watching their strong, bronze-skinned faces, reddened by the glow of their fire, which had burned down to a bed of coals. Again I wondered, as frequently I had wondered since that morning at the *fiesta*, where I had seen such faces before. Then, in a flash—literally a flash—the answer came to me.

A meteor shot flaringly across the dark-blue sky. Never but once before had I beheld a meteor so bright, and naturally the occasion of my seeing that other came vividly to mind. It was when I was becalmed in a Malay *prâo* on the China Sea; and the faces of my companions then were blood-brethren to the faces I now beheld.

Not for an instant then did I doubt that the Lequos were of Malay origin. It was only the apparently wild absurdity of finding men of that race in the middle of South America that had prevented me until that moment from recognizing the type. Nevertheless, as if in order to clinch my convictions, the powers which rule such things chose that moment for one of those coincidences which occur perhaps once or twice in a man's lifetime.

The Lequo boy—the one who had giggled at the singed saint—saw that meteor when I did; and with a shout he pointed to the flare that it made. The patriarch, his great-grandfather, whose back was in that direction, turned sharply.

"*Apa dia?*" he demanded.

With a triumphant thrill I stepped forward.

"*Di chirit bintang*," I replied, answering his question.

Now I don't wish to convey any false impression. I couldn't for the life of me carry on a conversation in any Malay dialect, but no one can be thrown into close contact with Malays for years without picking up a word or two. The old chief's question meant, "What is it?" or "What was it?" I don't know which. Remembering the phrase used on that *prâo* to describe the phenomenon we saw, I replied—

"It is a shooting star."

Probably not one of the five words spoken were correct according to classical Malay standards—if there are any such standards. Almost certainly they were ungrammatical, if any grammar was involved. But the point is this: We understood each other; and that, to my mind, proved the genesis of the Lequo tribe beyond the possibility of question.

As they heard their own tongue, which they always had believed that none but they could understand—as they heard their native tongue, I say, spoken by a stranger from a far land, there was a moment of astounded silence. It ended as there burst forth a chorus of such excited chatter that it sounded like the vicinity of a tree where parrots fly to roost at sunset. Then the old chief waved his hand, and when the chattering died away he asked a question, of which I couldn't understand a word; but, guessing at his meaning, I told him in Spanish how little I knew of his language and how I had learned that little. He listened intently, now and then interpreting for the benefit of the others. All of them were keenly interested, for I told them of their own people, from whom their tribe had been separated for more centuries than they could count.

I left much sooner than they wanted me to, for I was more tired than they and needed rest. I couldn't think of any Malay equivalent for "Good night"—in fact I'm not sure that I ever knew one. Therefore, mostly in Spanish, addressing the old chief, I said as I left—

*"Buenas noches, moyong."*

I wasn't quite certain—and am not now—just what *moyong* means. Something like "great-grandpa," I think. I had an idea that it was a family title of honor, outranking *dato*, which means both "grandfather" and "chief." Anyway the old boy was enormously pleased and rather adopted me after that.

The next and many subsequent days found "Moyong"—this became my name for him—found Moyong and me in company. Naturally we would be. He was of course in command of the first *callapo;* and this *callapo*, equally of course, was the one upon which I traveled. His post was on the bow of the starboard *balsa.*. On his left stood the boy, his great-grandson, whose name sounded like "Arang." (Could it be an ancient Malay form of Aaron? I wonder!) On Arang's left stood the old chief's eldest son, the boy's grandfather. Aft, to port and starboard, were stationed a grandson and another son; five men in all.

The other five *callapos* were manned in like fashion as at sunrise the next morning we led them in procession out from shore. For a moment we hung in slack water; then the current caught us and swept us like chips into that roaring hell of tortured foam. Our real journey had begun; and, terrifying though it had been in anticipation, the reality, for a time at least, was infinitely worse.

Largely because it was so different I was reminded of an indoor game, prevalent in my childhood, played on a sloping board studded with pins, from one to another of which a marble bounced as it rolled downward. But the marble rolled slowly, urged only by gravity. The pins were regularly spaced, and no matter how many of them were struck, no harm was done. Instead of pins on that great, watery board of ours there were rocks, spaced anyhow and everyhow. One real bump and we, who represented the marble, were done for; for the flimsy rafts would become nothing but scattered splinters; and the water-devils who had us in their grip tried to dash us—or so it seemed—with the speed almost of bullets against nearly every rock.

After a time, however, my mind became aware of two facts: That we hadn't bumped and that apparently we weren't going to. This realization made room for other facts. For example, that notwithstanding our great speed there was no breeze in our faces, because the lower stratum of air was carried with the current. Also I perceived that those table-like platforms served to raise our goods above the foam, which, being unable to float the logs, dashed freely over them. I saw that those upturned prows gave the rafts power to right themselves after nose-diving over some gigantic ripple. And so on.

All this, though, was secondary. What I really watched was the Lequos. What "he-man's" work theirs was! I have said that the Whirlpool Rapids of Niagara offer only inadequate standards by which to judge the Kaka. Yet if there existed any class or race of men who for good reason made their living by taking matchwood rafts up and down the Whirlpool Rapids, wouldn't their fame extend through all the civilized world? And wouldn't their work rank high—even above that of firemen, say, or commercial aviators—among those who follow what might be called the world's heroic industrial pursuits? There can be only one answer to those questions. Yet the work of such men would be less hazardous and less expert than that which the Lequos performed year after year.

Each Lequo was furnished with a cane push-pole and a massive paddle. The first oddly enough they call a *remo*, the second a *pala*, which are the Spanish—not Malay—words meaning "oar" and "shovel" respectively. These are the tools of their trade. And how they could use those tools!

Perhaps only a deft touch was needed to straighten us on our course. Perhaps the heavy shovels were braced, using the raft as a fulcrum, while the crew pulled sidewise with corded muscles and prehensile toes which, as they clung to the logs, whitened under the strain when a quick turn was made. Sometimes, though not often, the push-poles—the "oars"—were called into quick play, staving us off from disaster.

Now and then, as we mounted some overgrown ripple, one could see for miles up and down the river. Usually nothing could be seen save water, twisted into queer, swift streaks or whipped into froth. Yet the crew was never at fault. No commands were given; it would have been difficult to make them heard above the river's rush and roar; and besides, no commands were needed. Each man knew exactly what to do and when to do it. Each motion was as unhesitating, hasteless and assured as if it had been rehearsed like a vaudeville sketch.

Two of the rapids are honored with names of their own, both Spanish: Diablo Pintado—Painted Devil, and Retama—Challenger. On the whole they are no worse than the other rapids; only longer. The latter, it is true, boasts a cataract, and I was unmercifully chaffed because for days I had been dreading the time when we must shoot this cataract, and then never knew when it occurred.

It was just after this that I first saw Lequo women.

The Lequos live in scattered family communities all along the Kaka. Now one of these communities—the one ruled by my "Moyong"— was in the process of migration. Upon asking the reason for this migration I was told that it was because the river was in so exceptionally favorable a stage. This reply set one to speculating as to what an unfavorable stage would be like. But this speculation came later. At the time there were those Lequo families to be observed.

There were degrees in the Kaka's menace. Once in a while indeed it would for a little cease that menace, to run smoothly, though swiftly, like a mill-race. For the most part, however, the worst rapids were separated merely by stretches of white water that were not quite so bad. Down one of these stretches bobbed and courtesied the twenty *callapos* or more upon which this sub-tribal migration was made. The rafts were laden with scanty household goods, a few old men, some young children, but mostly—women.

Women of all ages were there, from adolescence to dotage. Many of the younger ones were pretty. Some were beautiful, and all had beautiful figures. One can speak with the utmost confidence in making this statement; the evidence was plain to be seen. Ashore, as I afterward learned, these women sometimes wear a long, rather shapeless gown on ceremonial occasions. Now their costume was far less formal—merely a short and very scanty sort of chemise, that clung to the wearer more closely because it invariably was soaked to the point of semi-transparency.

A migration like this one seemed to be a distinctly festive occasion. They sang and joked, laughed and shouted to each other and to us. Naked and unspeakably graceful, resembling nothing so much as animated bronze statuettes, the children between the ages of seven, say, and fourteen darted about like water-bugs, each one standing upright on two or three sticks loosely tied together and so small that I would never have believed they could support the half of even so slight a weight.

Soon, however, the fact concerning those children that began most strongly to impress me was how few of them there were. I had been told long before that the Lequo was dying out, and here was concrete evidence of the fact. The reason, I fancy, is not far to seek.

Between water from rivers born in Andean snows and the eternal *cañaza*, a gourd of which is rarely far beyond his reach, the masculine Lequo passes most of his life in a state of saturation, outside and inside. The one penalty that he pays—he seems to escape all the others—is semi-sterility.

As for the Lequo woman, hers is a different question. She is not allowed to mate with a man of alien race; the male Lequo is as jealous of his racial purity as ever was a hidalgo of ancient Spain. The moral status that he forces upon the woman can be epitomized thus: She must be chaste, undetected or dead. Living as the Lequos do, it is difficult long to escape detection. *Cholos* of Lequo blood are therefore rare.

It is not alone upon his erring women that the Lequo inflicts the extreme penalty. As a matter of fact it is common rather than otherwise. This is not because he is naturally cruel—he isn't. But apart from banishment, death is practically the only penalty that he can enforce. Moreover, so far as the person most interested is concerned it is so decisive an assurance against repetition of the crime. The Lequo loves decisive results.

A case in point—or so I greatly fear—was brought to my notice about this time. We were passing through a bit of particularly nasty water when the old chief turned and faced me, grinning in his most amiable manner.

"It is here," he shouted, so that I could hear above the roar, "that a very illustrious countryman of yours, whose name I forget, was drowned."

"How did that happen?" I shouted in return.

Moyong's grin became broader.

"Certain men and he were not in sympathy," was the reply; then the old man turned once more to his work with the *pala*.

So far as I knew no countryman of mine, illustrious or otherwise, ever had come to grief in the Kaka. Naturally I made inquiries when I could and long afterward encountered a man who could answer my question. He would not trust himself to pronounce the English name, but he wrote it down on a bit of paper and handed it to me. It was Fenimore Cooper. Later still I heard that it was a nephew of the great novelist who, many years before, had failed to return from a journey into the Bolivian interior. Whether this statement is true or not I don't know. I never verified it.

ALL this, however, was then in the future. At the time my *callapos* and those bearing the Lequo families kept jolly company until the district of Caupolicán, my objective, was reached. There I built my base camp. On the shore, a little way below, the Lequo community saw fit to establish its new *kampang*.

*Kampang*, by the way, means "village." Often I have wondered if the word may not be remotely akin to the Anglo-Indian "compound," meaning "enclosure." It sounds plausible—but I am no philologist.

Neither a philologist nor anthropologist am I—worse luck! Only an engineer whose scientific training, what there is of it, was strictly confined to lines pertaining to his own profession. Yet I did my best during the hot, moist months that followed—fourteen of them—to accumulate notes and photographs taken of the Lequos. Some of them, especially the photographs, might have proved to be of value—had they survived.

The rains came, with floods and—in my case—a peculiar sort of intermittent fever. Also there came an emergency which required me at any cost to regain touch with mails and telegraph cables. No time could be less favorable for such a journey.

For me, racked by fever as I was, an overland journey would be as nearly impossible as anything well could be; and one glance at the torrent that tore by our camp was enough to convince me that even the Lequos would refuse to make any attempt at an up-stream trip. But I underestimated my men.

The old chief, it is true, questioned me narrowly and with unwonted gravity as to the necessity that drove me forth; but once convinced that I had to go, he said no more; only acted. A single *balsa* was chosen with the greatest care. Its crew of four men, except for Arang, who remained behind, were those who had manned my *callapó* on the down-stream journey.

To eyes less accustomed than mine had become, the river might well have seemed far less dangerous than it was when we descended its stream. Now that stream was comparatively smooth, because it was so much deeper, and all but the very largest rocks were covered. I had come to understand that its lowered voice and its swift, smooth relentlessness conveyed a menace that was lacking before. But I was very far indeed from a realization of how deadly that sullen menace was.

Yet it was with their usual air of debonair assurance that the Lequos dug their heavy paddles into the stream and strained against them. We started by making a crossing in order to reach backwaters to be found on the far side. The four powerful men put every ounce of their trained strength into their work; but it seemed as the banks raced by our stern that we moved forward hardly at all. We were carried down-stream so far that we camped that night almost exactly opposite the point from which we started.

The backwaters made comparatively easy going for a few miles, then ended. Thenceforward we won our way inch by inch. I wrote, "we" inadvertently, probably because I was among those present; but small indeed was my contribution toward our progress. Usually I sat on my meager baggage, enjoying either chills or semi-delirium, while old Moyong stood on the bow of the *balsa* with a push-pole, keeping it off-shore, and the remaining three leaned against the rattan tow-line until their sweating faces nearly touched the ground, as they "tracked" the *balsa*, inch by inch, against the fierce current.

Once a snag stuck its finger between two of the logs, so that the raft tipped and flung me overboard as a boy might flip the shell of a peanut from his palm. The old chief and his eldest son nearly drowned me in their devoted attempts to rescue, which prevented the proper use of my legs and arms for swimming purposes.

Once an ebullition, surging upward from below and catching the *balsa* on its summit, turned it upside down with me underneath so quickly that it was like a juggling trick. Luckily we were fast to the bank then, and the Lequos had pulled me ashore before I had time to figure out what had happened.

Once—and this was a real disaster, though I didn't find it out until some time afterward—one of those whirlpools formed with its "dimple" directly under us. It was a peculiar sort of experience.

We were in the middle of the river at the time, making another crossing and of course going down-stream so fast that it would take hours of "tracking" to recover the lost ground. Suddenly to my great astonishment I saw that the down-stream movement had entirely ceased. Instead the raft began to whirl, at first slowly but with increasing speed. Then it began also to sink. As steadily as a descending elevator it went, except that elevators don't spin. I stood on the raised platform; yet the water passed my knees, then my waist, and crept upward until it nearly covered my chest. Then the raft began to rise as steadily as it went down, its whirling becoming slower as it neared the surface.

The Lequos, watching vigilantly, kept themselves afloat in the smoothly whirling water surrounding the central "dimple" that clutched the raft and revolved around it in concentric circles. They reminded me of four flies that had been flung into an emptying stationary wash-basin. But just before our raft reached the surface they swam hard in order to regain their places and began to paddle with all their might because as soon as the whirlpool dissolved, the current reasserted its right to sweep us down-stream as before.

Before we had finished our crossing there came a downpour of rain that was as blinding as a snowstorm, so thick and so many were its watery curtains. One needs unimpeded vision when navigating the Kaka at any time, but especially when it was in such a stage. So we made a dismal, soppy camp, and around fires that were mostly smoke, sat down to wait for the rain to end. It lasted, with a single hour of intermission, for eleven days. It had taken us thirty-four days to reach that spot, and we were detained there for twelve; forty-six days in all. We had covered the same ground on our down-stream trip in considerably less than the same number of hours. Forty-six days—and our journey hardly begun!

Worse still, that rain prevented me from drying my papers. I had made their wrapping as nearly waterproof as I could, but owing to their prolonged immersion in that whirlpool I feared greatly—and my fears were realized. When at last on the twelfth day I opened the package I found that its contents not only were soaked, but also had fermented. Photographs, maps and notes, professional and personal, that through so many months I had been gathering with such labor and care, all had become an obscene, gray-white mass, looking like a certain fungus that I used sometimes to encounter in the jungle—that stank like this fungus too, and which was as devoid of legible inscription.

Still it couldn't be helped—so there you were! Anyway during that dismal period of waiting the Lequos talked more freely about themselves than they had done before. I learned that there was a tradition among them which told of their originally having lived for a long time "on a great water." Whether this tradition related to their original migration or was merely a survival of the omnipresent legend of the biblical deluge is a point in doubt. I am inclined to the former opinion, but I have no real arguments to back it with.

Their religion was a matter which they clearly did not care to discuss, and therefore I refrained from questions that concerned it. From what I could gather indirectly I think that it must be a sort of hazy pantheism, with the Kaka personified as a tutelary deity, beneficent or otherwise according to its mood. It is this deity, I inferred, that requires their fiercely jealous sense of personal honor, which is the guiding principle of their lives. It was a case of this sort which obtruded itself into our final leave-taking.

It was long, however, before the time for that leave-taking came. Drenched, insect-bitten, days ran into many weeks before our destination was reached. It was not to Mapiri that we went; the smaller river at such a stage, the Lequos told me, would be a flat impossibility. So we stopped at Guanay, an outlying rubber station, from which, by a circuitous and toilsome route, and by keeping machetes constantly at work in reopening old paths through the jungle, one might win out on muleback to civilization.

At Guanay we found a party of Lequos, all men, who were strangers to me. Their faces were grim; and this grimness, after a few words were spoken, was shared by my

Lequo friends. It was not they, but men of the station personnel, who told me what the trouble was.

A woman, the wife of one of them, had eloped with an Aymará half-breed. On a stolen *balsa* they had taken the desperate chance of running the river in hope of reaching the Madeira, where they might find some measure of safety. We had seen a couple flash by, separated from us by half a mile of rushing water, but of course my Lequos could recognize no faces at that distance.

Provisions already had been purchased, and so had a plentiful supply of cartridges for the weapons which the Lequos affect—old .44 Winchester rifles, model of 1873. A hurried council was held; not as regards the penalty to be inflicted, for that was automatically settled by the offense, but as to the best method of pursuit. In that council I naturally had no part, but I watched it. Expecially I watched one of its members. No one could have kept from watching him.

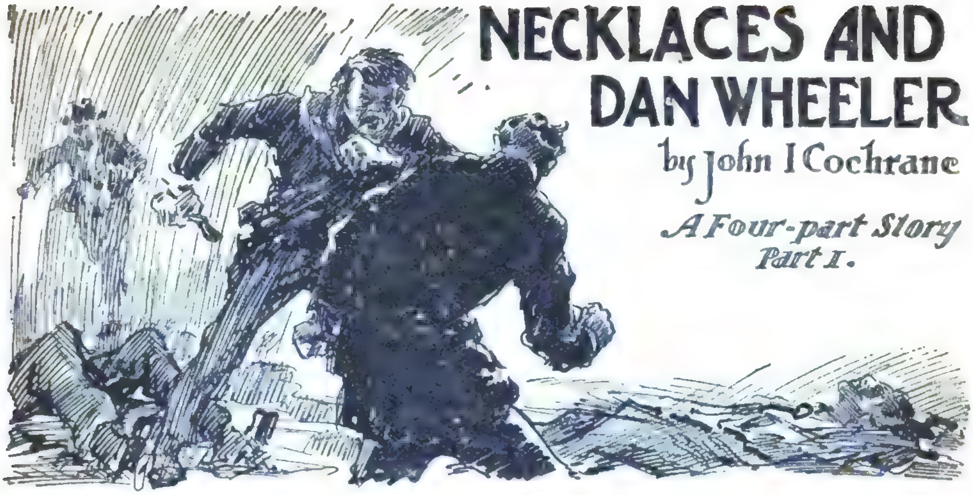
He was the injured husband, an exceptionally handsome man of early middle age, and evidently a person of weight and standing. But somewhere—from some trader—he had acquired a hat, the only one I ever saw on a Lequo's head; and such a hat! It was of white straw with a wide brim. A "sailor" such as our children used sometimes to wear, with pink-silk streamers dangling behind and a white elastic that went under the chin. Perhaps that hat might have afforded a clew which, if followed, would have served to disclose the reason for that marital catastrophe; but the reason was of little consequence now. It was the accomplished fact alone that mattered.

The council broke up. My friends shook hands with me hastily; they had no time to do more. Within a few minutes a procession of *callapos*, all heavy with armed men, swung out into the stream, that which contained both my Moyong and those streamers leading it.

The two white men resident at the station were not impressed by this scandal in Lequo circles. It was not, I fancy, the first one they had known. It was our trip that interested them. They plied me with eager questions, the answers to which they could hardly believe. In return they informed me with an earnestness that left no room for doubt that an up-stream journey in such circumstances never within the memory of living man had been attempted before. They mentioned the odds they would have offered against the success of such an attempt, and the shortest price mentioned was ten to one.

I had taken those chances in ignorance. My Lequos took them gaily and with full knowledge of how great they were, merely to help one whom they looked upon as a friend. Through much of that horrible journey they had tended me, a fever-ridden incubus, as if I were an ailing woman, and had done it with a grin as if they thought it the best fun in the world. No hint of the risks we ran had come from them.

There is no "swank" about the Lequo, no trace of boastfulness of the feats he performs. As I said, he is a gentleman; and when I saw those *callapos* vanish around a bend in the river I was filled with keen regret and a sense of great loss, because I knew how vastly improbable it was that I should ever see those gentlemen again.



# NECKLACES AND DAN WHEELER

by John I Cochrane

*A Four-part Story*
*Part I.*

*Author of "Sled Wheeler and the Nameless Order," "Sled Wheeler and the Diamond Ranch," etc.*

"COME, move on, son—take a walk for yourself!"

The policeman growled his cheerful order in passing, without a look behind him to see it obeyed. He may have noticed that the worn clothing on the athletic figure had been well-tailored, or he may have sensed something of thoroughbred strain in the lines of young McLeod's despondent back.

The young man had stood gazing through a plate-glass window at a brilliant necklace of diamonds. He turned away wearily and moved on once more. Looking at diamonds! A lot he had to do with diamonds or they with him! No doubt the copper thought he was planning to steal them. His sensitive lips curled slightly in a bitter smile.

The street clanged and roared to New York's down-town traffic; hurrying men jostled him as they rushed after more money; but in all the city it seemed that there was no job—hardly a civil word—for a fellow just out of the "pen." He had been made to serve nine months for a theft he had not committed, and now he was an outcast. Three days he had starved and tramped the streets with never a ghost of a show at employment, and he was dizzy from weakness.

He wavered a bit as he jammed his hands deeper in his pockets and shivered in the early Spring wind. Diamonds! Hah!

There was one, now! His hopeless eyes were caught by a clear bluish stone that flared from an Ascot scarf; but he did not look into the face of the wearer for dread of the contempt he would meet. He got a distinct impression, however, of a virile, aggressive presence; he felt the power that radiated from a man perfectly groomed and abounding with a health that made mere existence a joy; and he was the more wretched by contrast. He clenched his teeth and lifted his head in protest as he told himself anew that he would not appeal to any of his college mates in the city—he would get a job himself, or drop in the streets from starvation.

Just ahead of him the sidewalk was blocked by the overhang of a truck backed up to the curb. At the truck's tail a huge packing-case poised and toppled, threatened to tip back and crush the small Irish truck-driver who heaved and strained beneath it. It was too heavy for one man, and the truckman's hands were slipping.

Mac leaped to the rescue and caught hold beside the truckman, holding the box just in time and saying—

"Get a fresh hold!"

"I have ut!" grunted the Irishman. "Now thin, *all* together! Yo-o—*he-e-e haw!* That's the b'y—good lad!"

As the big box slammed into the truck-bottom the small driver wheeled about to shout into the open door of the warehouse—

"Look-ye-here, Dutch! Not another wan av thim —— elephint-houses do I handle be my loneself—d'ye mind!"

He dusted his hands pugnaciously as he declaimed:

"'Tis a job f'r two husky min to wrastle thim into a thruck—d'ye mind. I'll do no more av ut, I'm tellin' yeh!"

Into the doorway waddled a fat German Jew with a limp and a squint, and to him Mac appealed—

"Give me the job—I can do it!"

Hands outstretched, he looked up eagerly.

"I got me enough men alretty."

The fat man looked down his fleshy nose with contempt and cunning.

"*Aber*—you hellup Irish loat dose poxes der truck insite, und I gif you a quvarter."

McLeod was inside the door as he finished his speech, but the piglike eyes of the proprietor instantly noted the prison hair-cut.

"Hey—vere you vork lest?" he demanded suspiciously.

"I—in the penitentiary," Mac answered hoarsely.

He knew what was coming, and he faced the fat man with hands clenched. He was pale and grim.

"Oudt! Oudt from mine store! Oudt—you pum!"

Waving short arms in terror of assault, the merchant backed off while he called to two beefy porters who were working a freight-lift in the rear:

"Hellup! Heinrich! Conrad! *Komm hier! Ein ganef*— A t'eif! Kick him der door oudt!"

"I can't steal your boxes!" McLeod gritted through his teeth and stepped forward. "What difference does it——"

"Moider! Bol-leece! Moider!" shrieked the fat man, backing faster in a panic of terror. "*Heinrich—werf' ihn 'raus!*"

"Oh, I am going—I won't touch you."

Mac shrugged wearily and turned toward the door.

"But you—hands off! Don't touch me!"

He turned on the big porter who kept coming after him with an ugly leer on his face, his heavy jaw outthrust, to the very doorway. But the big brute saw only a girl-faced youth, pale and frightened, so he reached for his victim with a relish.

"Soak the —— squarehead!" advised Mac's good friend the truckman in an undertone. "A-a-ah, *Heh!* Oh-h, a sweet wan! Good lad—*now* beat it before you're pinched!"

And the Irishman licked his lips with joy at the sight.

For Mac had whipped a clean uppercut to the heavy chin, and the big porter dropped on his face like a pole-axed steer, what time the fat man in the background bellowed the louder:

"Moider—pol-leece—moider! Make arrest der moiderer! Pol-leece—pol-leece—Pol-l—ump!" as the bellower backed over a hand-truck and sat down ponderously.

Mac was already out on the sidewalk, looking back over his shoulder in the direction of the copper who had moved him on, when he ran plump into the embrace of another officer who had no business to be there.

"Whoa!"

The cop took a come-along hold on Mac's arms.

"What's all the riot?"

The jolted German on the floor within still ripped the air with his roars, but the loyal son of Erin on the sidewalk was nearer, and therefore made himself heard above the tumult:

"'Twas nawthin' a-tall, officer! Dutch he's yellin' his head off an the flure in there, d'ye see—Dutch is after sickin' wan av his squarehead wops an the lad here—and the lad didn't do a thing but lift him a sweet wan an the jaw, d'ye mind; whin he had a good right to sock the boots to um, d'ye see. 'Twas askin' after a job the lad was, like a gintleman, whin the fat Dutchman starts yellin' like ye hear um—d'ye mind. A fine handy lad, and I'd 'a' had the guts squashed out o' me——"

"Whoa! Back up! That'll be all now!"

The officer raised a hand to stop the confusing duet.

"I'll take you both along; you can tell your troubles to——"

"One moment, officer!"

It came out crisply in a moment of silence. The fat proprietor had got on his feet, and from the door he saw an elegantly dressed young man talking to a police captain. McLeod's startled eyes were again fixed on the flaring diamond in the white Ascot scarf. And the officer found himself looking into the long, level eyes of the man who had dropped out of nowhere to arrange things. The next instant the well-groomed stranger turned to McLeod with a familiar nod.

"I was looking for you, Mac," he said casually; then to the bluecoat:

"I know this man, officer. Some mistake here—I will answer for him."

As the hand of the Law fell from Mac's sleeve the elegant young man slipped something into it—but so deftly that no one but the officer was wiser—and instantly took Mac's arm, remarking—

"We'll get out of this, Mac, before any more rubbernecks block the traffic."

"See here, Schwarz!"

The officer transferred his attention to the fat merchant.

"There have been some complaints about your blocking the sidewalk. The commissioner says it has got to stop."

The fat merchant now had troubles of his own that took all his attention, so McLeod found himself free, walking away from the knot of curious bystanders with his mysterious rescuer, arm in arm. The stranger's face, seen in profile, was boldly clear-cut with a look of ruthless power that gave Mac a start. He suddenly realized that he wanted to know the man beside him—was attracted by his careless power—but that he himself was sailing under false colors. The stranger doubtless had mistaken him for some one else. Mac disengaged his arm gently.

"Thank you for keeping me out of jail. B-B-But I'm afraid there's some mistake."

Mac stammered when moved, and he was strangely moved now—the old, familiar "Mac" had gone straight to his lonely heart.

"I haven't b-b-been called M-Mac s-s-since I was sent to the penitentiary f-f-for s-s-stealing."

The stranger gave him a quick, sidelong glance from a pair of long-slit greenish eyes that stirred Mac still more, for it had a suggestion of understanding—even of companionship—and walked on at his side with the comment:

"Rang the bell with 'Mac,' did I? I always was lucky."

"B-B-But you s-s-said you knew—" Mac was stammering when the stranger broke in:

"I said I knew *you*. I was watching you, and you're not a crook. I can spot them. If you're just out of the pen you're lonely—what?"

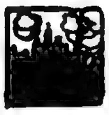
"Yes. Of c-c-course—b-b-but——"

Again the stranger interrupted:

"I know a good place to eat, just up Broadway. Then we can talk. Want to come along? I've got a proposition to make."

"Do I *want* to!" Mac responded promptly. "Yes!"

"Good leather!"



THE stranger turned the corner into Broadway, and they walked for half a block without further speech. When Mac could come abreast again he could not resist saying gratefully—

"I have eaten once in three days—one real meal—and you are the f-f-first man——"

He stopped because his lips were trembling and tears coming to his eyes, surprizing him and shaming him into silence. The stranger never looked round at him, but said quietly:

"Yeh—takes the starch out of a man to starve. After you get a good hot feed under your shirt, you'll be ready to lick me for two cents. And you showed that squarehead a pretty uppercut."

There was an instant of silence; then Mac staggered weakly against the wall and began to laugh—a low, hysterical laugh mixed with painful half-sobs. It was something new for him to lose control of himself, but in his weak and sensitive state the stranger's kindness had deeply moved him. Then this last casual speech, with its tactful attempt to spare him, was so strongly in contrast with the man's keen and dangerous appearance—so astounding, coming from those thin merciless lips—that it was too much for Mac. He leaned back and put a feeble hand to his streaming eyes.

"P-P-Pardon me—I—ho-ha—I— It's so—a-ha—so absurd!"

He gulped, hiccoughed, and got in an occasional word between.

"You—ha-ha—sa-saying a thing like that! Go on! You-you d-don't want people to——"

"Quit that!"

The stranger took Mac's arm in a steely grip and pushed his face close—a face to frighten Lucifer himself. Mac was struck dumb and sober in an instant.

"What's absurd?" the stranger went on regardless of curious passers-by. "You mean it's absurd for *me*—with this face—to show tact! Yes, I can even speak your language if I haven't been to Harvard. Now quit that and come on—you're all strung up."

And Mac found himself once more decorously walking beside his strange companion.

After furtively wiping his face on his sleeve he found he could talk.

"You hit it—I am all unstrung, and dressed like what I am—a tramp. You don't want to be seen with me."

The other man looked straight ahead and said:

"That is for me to say. A clean collar and twenty minutes in the barber-shop next door will make you look like what you are—a gentleman. Any fool can see that. And I'm not a fool, even if I don't look like a gentleman."

"Nobody insinuated anything like that," Mac protested.

"Oh, I am used to it. I've got the face of a killer; I hear it until I am sick. But when I like the looks of a man and want to get acquainted, it gets next to me to have him take me for a beast. So much for that.

"Now I like your looks; I have got money and a job for you if you want it; but we can't talk it over *right* until you are yourself. If you will let me pay for a shave and hair-cut, a clean collar and a good feed, I will tell you how you can pay me back. Are you on?"

And at the end of his speech the stranger turned on Mac his benumbing greenish eyes. For all the cold menace of his aggressive face, in his look there was a strong attraction that made Mac assent at once—

"Of course I will."

"Then take this, and there's the barber-shop. I'll order a planked steak and things, and wait for you in here. The grub will be ready when you are."

With that the man put in Mac's hand a folded bill, and entered a world-famous restaurant on the corner without a look behind him.

McLeod took a look at the bank-note in his hand—it was a ten. The very trust that it implied had a bracing effect, and he gave himself up to a revel in soap and hot water, followed by every service a barber-shop could render inclusive of a shine. Then he bought himself a collar and cravat and put them on. He could feel every stage of his physical transformation with its accompanying inner counterpart, and it was a new man all through who entered the luxurious restaurant. He took his seat opposite his benefactor with a frank, welcoming smile.

"I went through the whole thing—I knew that was your idea," he said.

"Good leather!"

His companion looked up from the paper he had been reading with a note of slight surprise in his tone. Then his look of approval became fixed and intent, while Mac on his side stared with equal surprize.

Each had something worth looking at. Mac's face was darkly strong yet strangely sensitive—showed the mixture of Puritan and Cavalier blood in his veins—with features of almost effeminate delicacy. His smile was a beautiful and revealing thing.

The other man would have been called strikingly handsome if it had not been for the surplus fighting strength that showed in his clear-cut cameo features — that gleamed in the long, level, greenish eyes. And each man took in the other with a long, absorbent gaze. Then Mac smiled again, putting his hand in his pocket.

"I haven't counted the change," he began; but the other stopped him with a slight movement of his hand—a peculiarly graceful hand, smoothly tapered like a woman's—as he said:

"Keep it for the check and the waiter. He will think you are paying. Here he comes."

Mac caught his lip in his teeth. The other said warningly—

"Now—now!"

And they exchanged grins. The stranger's grin was small and grudging, quickly gone, but it showed just the edge of even white teeth and lighted his cold face surprizingly.

Hardly a word was spoken between them while McLeod ate three parts of the planked steak, because Mac could not trust himself to say a word. Even as it was, the tears sprang to his eyes as he began—from pure delight and gratitude.

If that sounds extravagant—if you don't believe it—you have never starved three days. You have to be really hungry—right—to know the sensation of a starving man at his first taste of hot, rich food. It is more than the gratification of taste. It embraces all the senses with its kind and comforting thrill. It starts from a man's surprized stomach, warmly spreading and strengthening every tissue as it tingles from hair to shoe-sole—it floods him with its warm blessing, penetrates each atom of his being, seems to caress his very soul and fills him with the sweet, intimate content of a babe at its mother's breast.

Twice Mac looked up from his restrained but exquisite pleasure with a pathetic movement of his lips—half-smile, half a tremulous appeal for forbearance—and each time the stranger narrowed his long, level eyes still more as his own lips twitched, then straightened mercilessly. For the greater part of the time he sat like a virile statue "cut in alabaster"—eating only now and then; and in his strange eyes glittered a still stranger light that no man could interpret.

Finally Mac sat back to draw a long breath and to absorb the warmth and luxury of his surroundings. The coffee was set before them, and then McLeod spoke with deliberate precision.

"Well, you may guess what this means to me, but you can't guess how grateful I am. I am ready to do absolutely anything—anything that I can conceive—to pay for it. I can't——"

He paused, and his companion raised a slow, graceful hand in protest.

"Pardon *me!* Before we do any more melodrama or pathos—before we turn on the soft music and the dimmers—I want to tell you something that may make a difference. When you know who I am you may want to quit, and it will be all right. Have you ever heard of Dan Wheeler?"

Mac's hands gripped the table as he stared for a stunned minute. The cool, menacing face opposite him seemed to fill all the room. The exploits of the famous gambler, gunman and manhandler came before him in review as he had heard them told on "the Island." With them he recalled the man's reputation for reckless generosity. He could believe them all now. He heard himself whisper:

"'Sled' Wheeler himself! Of all the luck!"

"How do you mean that?" Wheeler snapped. "There are two kinds of luck."

"How? You must know—or you are being sarcastic."

And under the patent admiration in Mac's wide eyes Wheeler slowly flushed.

"How about some of your college friends—seeing you around with me?" he asked soberly. "I want straight talk."

"Ha! My college friends!"

Mac threw back his head in delight.

"The only one in town I care about is Piet Van Twiller, and he used to bore us to tears bragging that he used to know Dan Wheeler in New York."

"Piet is all right," Wheeler nodded. "Well, about that job I spoke of. You are just the man I want, but—you will have to take the job sight unseen, on my word. I don't think you will be sorry if you take it, but I can't tell you just what we will do until I know myself. There will be some action, danger and so forth; and I have a hunch you will win, big, when the game is over."

"If you say it is all right that settles it," Mac said simply.

"Good leather!" Wheeler commented quietly; but he colored to his variegated hair.

Mac noticed for the first time that Dan's hair was light brown on top, shading to black over the ears; and with his level, black brows it added to his striking appearance. He was handsome now as he threw his head up and back with a twitch of his thin lips.

"My hunch that you win is getting stronger every minute," he said.

"Win what? Fun, money, danger?"

"All of 'em and then some more," Dan answered with his grim little smile. "Such as — diamonds, for instance! You were looking at some when I spotted you; and they get me, too."

Flashing a glance at Mac's blank face, he went on:

"I mean they won't let me alone—always getting tangled up with them. No, I don't mean stealing them. Did you think I was a crook? Some people do."

"No."

Mac was emphatic.

"The crooks are too afraid of you—they never are really scared of a crook. Why is that?"

"Because every crook has his yellow streak—every crook knows it—and I hate 'em."

Dan finished casually—

"Then it's a go?"

Mac reached out his hand without a word. But as they took hands across the table he smiled his most delightful smile, and even Wheeler flashed his quick grin in response.

"Pay the man, and we buy gents' furnishings—get you outfitted like a gentleman, I should say."

Wheeler raised a finger to summon the waiter with his check.

"We'll get you fitted at Rivers', and I have some things that will fit you at the hotel," Wheeler said as they got into a hansom cab outside. "That will carry you along while a good tailor is making you some clothes. We want to start this play right."

"I hope you will get your money back, and that you know how grateful I——"

"Now lay off the soft stuff!"

Wheeler dropped into the vernacular gruffly.

"I want you to understand I am no mushy philanthropist. I am working for Dan Wheeler *all* the time. I shall get mine, take it from Dan. So lay off the sob stuff and stay off!"

"I can do it if you keep me well fed," Mac grinned.

"I don't make many promises, but I'll see you have money. You will have to feed yourself—I'm no nurse. Here is a hat place. What size do you wear?"

"Seven and three-eighths."

"A quarter too large for a go-getter," Wheeler said as they got down. "Get the best in the place. I'll wait here."

He had his hand in his pocket when Mac held his arm.

"*You* lay off *that!*" he said. "I'm not so sensitive—come and tell me how I look. No man can buy a hat alone."

"We're going to enjoy life together—I can see that," said Dan with a sigh of relief. "A scrap every twenty-four hours! See how much you can pay for a soft hat—we swing high while the cash holds out."

"And what then—when it's gone?"

"Go get more. New York is rotten with it," Wheeler said soberly as they entered the store. "There's a walking Christmas tree now."

A rather overdressed six-footer in London clothes swung arrogantly toward them on his way out. He gave Wheeler a stare of surprize and a surly nod as he passed with a contemptuous glance at Mac's clothes.

"There goes a man I knew a little at college," said Mac. "Steve Collins the amateur champion heavyweight. He didn't see me, you notice."

"I knew him when we were kids," Wheeler said with a grim quirk of his lips. "He won't forget it right off. He'll see you when you're up in the front row, all right. We'll give him the chance anyway, I shouldn't wonder."

And the quick twist of Dan's chiseled lips was one that Mac learned to watch for as a sign of Things Doing.

## II

"And I am to be *paid* for this—and to live with you here?"

A strikingly handsome and well-groomed young gentleman, McLeod stood in the sitting-room of a three-room suite in the Grand Union Hotel and looked about him. He welcomed the shining bath-room, looked at himself in the long mirror and turned to the man who had worked the miracle. Wheeler was looking at his final product so critically that he only answered:

"M-hm! Turn around slowly. Well, you'll pass in a crowd. That suit looks as if it were made for you—it binds my shoulders. Only one thing wrong—you're all in the dark; need a head-light. Get a good sound stone in that four-in-hand and you're all lit up for business. We can fix *that*, too."

With evident satisfaction he drew from an inner pocket a small, flat case. He laid it on the table and took from it daintily a diamond scarf-pin like the one he was wearing. As he held it to the light and turned it in his steady taper fingers, a bluish ray seemed to flash back and forth from the diamond to his narrowed eyes and back again. At the darting interchange of rays his face lit up with a kindred cold fire.

"Certainly I like 'em!" he said as if Mac had spoken with his eyes still on the flaring gem. "They are so clean, and clear, and *hard*."

Even his voice had a cold, cutting edge. He added—

"They suit me."

"They're cold!" Mac broke out with a shiver.

"They feel cold to you!" Wheeler retorted quickly, flashing round on Mac with resentment. "How do you know what's inside them? There's fire there! Fire and action—devilment! And they cut anything they come against—no bluff about them—and always the same. They are always there with the goods—never lose their value, and more value than anything else of their weight. The easiest carried form of property—Wemmick's 'portable property' boiled down. *You* must learn to like 'em, and now is the time to start. Put it on!"

"Don't, man!" McLeod protested, shrinking from the beautiful jewel as it was held against his scarf. "I'd lose it or get it stolen; and I'd feel like a circus-parade—so conspicuous!"

"Say it! Vulgar display! Common! I know I'm a roughneck and a hick, but you have been kicking because your job was too soft—here's something to get your teeth in. I tell you to put—it—on!"

"Aye-aye, sir!"

Mac promptly took the pin and carefully inserted it in the tie he had chosen.

"What next?"

He turned from the mirror to find Wheeler already closing and pocketing the case, which still contained two fine stones. Dan answered:

"Next I'll put these in the office safe; you'll be ready to eat again, and then we'll settle what to do this evening. I want to get action without lost motion."

On the way down the long, silent hallway Wheeler spoke in a low tone, keeping an eye out for an open transom or door by the way.

"What do you know about the 'Spark Gang?'"

"I have read the papers," Mac said. "But on the Island they've got a different story by 'underground.' On the tiers they pass the word that some foreign 'gon' is working a smooth game. Some claim the Main Guy is using out-of-town yeggs and box-men to do his dirty work, then killing them when the job is finished—a new man for each job. Another story is that the Main Guy is some heavy swell gone crazy—a fire-bug and kleptomaniac—and that the authorities are trying to keep it dark. They say the police and Central Office have orders *not* to get him."

"It looks like they want to keep something dark," Wheeler assented. "More than a million in diamonds all told, and not one recovered or traced out of the country. I have got a notion of my own that there is a leak somewhere high up, perhaps in the Central Office itself."

"A leak—a traitor among the detectives, you mean?"

"Maybe, or one of them might be a partner—even the Main Guy himself."

Dan kept his voice low and his eyes busy, but spoke louder at the stair-head.

"Here's where we come to life—the return of the prodigals, Wheeler and McLeod, in the title rôles. I've been keeping out of sight until today—looking over the ground—so this is our first appearance in public, and I am looking for something to break before the evening is over."

"S-Something has b-broken now!"

Mac stopped half-way down the broad stairs to face Wheeler in surprize.

"How did you know my name was McLeod? I don't remember mentioning the fact."

"No? Poor memory perhaps."

Wheeler laid a hand on Mac's arm.

"S-Sst! See the man with the pink paper in the corner? Take a good look at him—and come on!"

He drew McLeod silently back up the padded stairs and out of sight. Then he explained:

"The man with the *Evening Telegram* has been too frequent lately. I have a notion he's shadowing one of us, and I want to make sure. We will go down the other stairs to the café. If he shows up again on our track it will mean we get action right from the tap of the gong."

WHEN they were seated in a small alcove where they could see without being conspicuous, Wheeler came back to the question of names.

"Queer you should be talking about your name just as we saw that dick in the reading-room, for it's my hunch he's trailing you. You must have told me your name, because I have been getting more certain every minute that you are the man wanted—Here! Read this!"

He handed over a paper folded to the Personals, and McLeod read:

Stuart McLeod. **Communicate at once with** *Herald*, **M 96.**

He read it twice, looked up at Wheeler, then read it again before he got the meaning of it.

"B-B-But who— What—" he stammered, and Dan put in:

"Who would it be? Got any folks—relatives?"

"Only one uncle, and he— I haven't seen him for years. He's—queer."

"Don't look so scared! Queer how?"

"Folks said he was cracked—traveled all over, and— Lord! If that should be Uncle Alan!"

McLeod looked at the paper as if it were something that might explode.

"Wouldn't shoot at sight, would he?" Wheeler asked soberly.

"Shoot? Why, he taught me to shoot and gave me my first fly-rod. He used to say he'd make my fortune some day, but the neighbors thought he was half-crazy—said his money was all in his mind."

"Married?" Wheeler asked quietly.

"No—we are the only ones left of the family."

"Better look him up in the morning. What do you want to eat?"

"Nothing—anything—you order."

McLeod waited until the waiter was gone, getting more excited every moment, then asked—

"When d-d-did you see this ad?"

"Yesterday. He had only been in town a few days."

"You know him? Have you s-s-seen him?"

Mac sat up with a jump.

"I don't know him. I have seen him drive by, and I have seen his house on the avenue—that's not in his mind," Wheeler said dryly. "He's in the Blue Book. I'd go right to the house."

"Whee!"

Mac sat back with a long whistle.

"Did you know about this when you picked me up?"

Dan narrowed his eyes.

"Not until you got a shave. Then I began to feel the hunch. You look like him, and I saw him once some time ago, but I didn't place you until I saw this ad just now. Talk about hunches! I'd rather have a hunch than an affidavit."

"How? Tell me what you mean. You've got me all stirred up," Mac pleaded.

"Steady! There's not much to tell—yet."

Dan took a quick look all about him.

"I have been offered good money to help get this Spark Gang man, and I have been looking over the ground on the quiet. I didn't think much of the job at first, but it looks better all the time, and I may take it yet."

"What has that got to do with—with my uncle?" Mac asked impatiently.

"He's one of the men putting up the money—the reward. And I find he was once a good friend to the best friend I ever had. Then you turn up—things keep happening."

Wheeler was tapping his fingers on the cloth as he summed up mentally.

Suddenly he stopped tapping.

"Mac, it looks like we'll have to *get* the cuss!"

"Wasn't that the job you had in mind for me?" McLeod asked quickly.

"Not exactly. It might have headed that way, and they want us mighty bad. It looks like it now— There is that dick again! I guess we're elected."

"I don't see anybody."

McLeod twisted in his seat.

"And what has he to do with it?"

"Either he's from the Central office, trailing me, or from a private agency shadowing you," Wheeler said carelessly. "He's behind that column now. And either way it looks as if somebody had wished it on us. Well, we're here first—let 'em come! Want to see a show? Better eat something."

McLeod forced himself to eat and found that he was hungry again, but he did not know what he was eating. He felt as if he were in a new and bigger world all at once, and he was dizzy with the sudden change. He wanted time to get his bearings and to realize his good fortune. Also he wanted to think things out before doing anything he might regret.

"I can't eat any more," he announced. "But—are we due anywhere in a hurry?"

"No, only to be living. What's on your mind?" Wheeler asked promptly. "You want more information—or a chance to catch up with things, which?"

"B-both, I guess."

Mac was startled at the insight of the question. "I can't make head or tail of this Spark Gang business, or——"

"Or anybody else!" Wheeler broke in. "All they know is that a lot of diamonds are in hiding, and they can't get the thief. When I know more I'll put you wise.

"About your uncle—he will tell you himself, but you can't see him tonight. He is a sick man, and they wouldn't disturb him at this hour on a bet. I am no good as a talker when I don't know what I'm talking about, so let her run! Take things as they come!"

As he looked into the strong, aggressive face across the table Mac felt a sudden freedom from all caution. He recalled some of the reckless exploits of the man who was speaking.

"All right—I'm with you," he said quietly. "Only I wish we were out West, or somewhere where things happen."

"Don't worry." Wheeler's tone was low and level. "*Men* make things happen, and we're in the middle of things right here. Let's move on."

"Lead on—I'll keep in sight if I can."

The waiter was bringing the check, and when Wheeler had signed it he led the way through the bar-room to Forty-second Street. Before they reached the door, however, the man who had been reading the paper in the reading-room appeared at Wheeler's side.

"The Chief would like to see you," he whispered.

"Tell him I'm visible in this latitude any time before midnight," Dan said cheerfully without turning his head.

Then to McLeod:

"We'll have time to walk over to Broadway, Mac. They say 'The Professor's Love-Story' is a winner."

McLeod saw the plain-clothes man standing with his mouth open. He turned his eyes on Mac, made a little gesture of hopeless resignation and dropped back into the stream of men passing out.

At the same instant Mac got a glimpse of two wise ones at the bar furtively looking in their direction—apparently at Wheeler—while the bartender directed them out of the corner of his mouth. It was plain that Wheeler was already a marked man in Manhattan.

He followed through the swinging doors into the roar of the street, under an increasing tension of suppressed excitement.

"Know anything about it?"

Dan was referring to the play.

"Have you ever seen this Englishman, Willard? He ought to be good, and it's at a good place."

"Let's try it. We'll be in good company anyway."

"You're not afraid some of your friends may see you with a bad-man from the West?" Wheeler asked with a twitch of the lips.

"'Lay off that—and stay off!'" Mac quoted.

Wheeler flashed a quick side glance of approval, and they walked west on the broad cross-street already a-stream with pleasure-seekers going the same way.

He noticed that Wheeler seemed quietly relaxed, like a man whose work was done and who was simply resting, and gradually lost his own feeling of suspense. He was delightfully surprized by the few terse little stories that Dan told of his own youth in New York, reminded thereof by some place or incident in passing. He was still more pleased and perplexed by Wheeler's choice of the play, as well as by his enjoyment of it.

IT WAS the very last show, of all those posted on the bill-boards, that one would expect a man-killing gambler to choose. The lovable professor is desperately in love with his beautiful secretary and doesn't know it. He does know that something is the matter with him, because he can't keep his mind on his books or make his brain work right, so he decides to take a vacation in the country as a sure cure for his malady. And he takes the lovely secretary with him.

That is all, and it is enough. The play has all the beauty of youth and selfless love—all the clean humor of cross-purposes in a big human heart—and is full of pretty pictures.

McLeod enjoyed it hugely, but often forgot his own enjoyment in watching Wheeler's keen delight. Dan was absorbed from curtain-rise to curtain-fall, chuckling deeply over the absent-minded professor, frankly fascinated by graceful Marie Burroughs.

"You can't blame him—she'd get any man," he announced twice between acts. "An awful deadly piece of mechanism, that girl, and no use to holler for help. She's got you before you know it."

And later he was moved to remark:

"Now, speaking of girls, watch that young woman walk! And I want to state she has them all running in the dust when it comes to *sitting down!* See her get into that chair? Believe Dan—she does that thing just right!"

"What about the professor?" Mac asked. "He is supposed to be good."

"Sure! He's two-thirds of the show—he's a big winner," Dan agreed.

"But no grown-up man could be so innocent," was Mac's objection.

"Don't fool yourself! The woods are full of 'em, and they make life worth living," Wheeler stated emphatically. "I am glad we picked this play—I am going to see it again. It does a man good."

McLeod was thinking over this surprizing statement after the play was over and they were slowly inching their way out through the theater lobby, moving about a yard per minute, surrounded by a soft-voiced, laughing throng of New York's best people. He was just beginning to look forward to a sleep in a real bed when Dan touched his arm:

"*There's* a girl! Over near the ticket-window with your friend Van Twiller—the one in the opera-cloak; and she thinks she knows you. Who is she?"

Mac felt his face flush hot, and had hard work not to look at once. When he did turn his head he got a start that turned him pale again, and he had barely enough strength to raise his hat as both Piet and the girl smiled at him. He was glad the crowd prevented his crossing the lobby in time to reach them. For it was The Girl!

Four years before he had seen her—spoken to her three times up in the little Vermont village that was becoming a fashionable Summer-resort—as one sees a queen on her throne, and she had been graciously kind to him as one of royal blood must be to all her subjects. But he did not suppose she would recognize him. Could she read his hopeless infatuation in his face, he wondered?

"Well? Want me to fade?" he heard Wheeler murmur at his ear.

He turned to see Dan staring into the distance, prepared to appear a stranger to him and to make a quick exit if necessary.

"No, you lobster!" he said loudly, then in a lower tone, "You know Piet, and probably you know that the girl with him is Miss Mary Mason—you have seen her name in the papers."

And he added—

"I told you before that stuff was all foolishness."

"I know, but what a man *says* and what he *does* under fire are two different propositions. And you turned about six assorted shades of red—I judged there was something doing. That is the girl then that Prince Whatshisnamesky was so crazy about—danced with her at the big Embassy Ball and had to be dragged to his private car—or did they turn the hose on him? They're gone now anyhow. Wow! S-St!"

The last was in a hissing whisper, and McLeod turned his head to see Wheeler transformed. He was once more the alert, dangerous man of action, and his voice now changed from a slightly hoarse drawl to its tense, resonant tone of command as he spoke close to Mac's ear—

"Follow along—slowly—wait for me on the walk outside!"

And McLeod nodded, watching him make his way through the press to the door in a way that seemed to disturb nobody yet took him out of sight in less than a minute.

Piet and The Girl had gone in their carriage, and Mac was standing on the sidewalk gazing in the direction they had taken—still thrilling at the recollection of her smile and the poise of her bronze head—when a firm hand on his arm roused him from his daze.

"They're gone—all gone, boy! And if you want to see her again you want to come to life and listen. I didn't look for it so soon, but I think we're nominated for a kidnaping-party, see? I want to catch one of the birds, so I am going to let them get you alone and drop in when they don't expect me.

"Now when we get to the corner I am going to *tell* you I am going around to Hawley's to buck the wheel. *Your* line is to say you'll walk down as far as Union Square, then back to the Grand Union to bed. Speak up so a man round the corner can hear. But you cross at Nineteenth Street—see?

"They'll probably bite, and jump you between Broadway and Fourth Avenue. Keep 'em busy and look for me in a four-wheeler about those days. Lay out one or two of 'em and leave the rest to Dan. Got all that?"

They were sauntering down Broadway as Wheeler issued these terse instructions, and he loitered for Mac's reply, idly looking about him meanwhile.

"Yes—down to Nineteenth, then cross to Fourth. Suppose they put me out at the first pass?"

"That's what you're there for—not to let 'em," Dan answered crisply. "If I am too far behind, sprint toward me—toward the carriage behind you—and lead them nearer. They won't use guns. Now then!"

As they neared the street-corner:

"I am going to buck the wheel—around at Hawley's. Want to come?"

"No. Too tired."

McLeod did an excellent yawn.

"I think I'll walk as far as Union Square, then back to the Grand Union. You'll find me in bed."

"I may not get in at all. So long!"

Wheeler turned off cross-town.

Mac walked south with the gradually thinning stream of home-goers. He did not try to pretend to himself that he was not a bit frightened, but he felt a relish for the adventure.

What could anybody want with him? He had nothing on his person worth stealing except the diamond in his tie, and that belonged to Dan. This could hardly be the work of the diamond thieves known to the reporters as the Spark Gang, for they only worked on the residences of the rich, or shops, where diamonds were to be had in quantity. This was only a joke of Wheeler's perhaps, or a test of his nerve—he would do his best to make good.

He reached Twenty-third Street in a surprizingly short time. Below this point Broadway was almost deserted, and when he reached Nineteenth it was apparently empty from end to end. He turned into it with a tightening of all his muscles. So far not a cab had passed or met him.

He kept away from the house-walls, walking near the curb and listening for the roll of wheels behind him. It seemed as if his legs were half-paralyzed and would not carry him ahead, like the familiar horror of a nightmare. But no sound of wheels.

A horse was trotting somewhere. With a jerk he turned his head and saw a carriage a short distance behind him. Rubber tires, of course; and he felt a foolish fury of resentment that there was only one horse to a four-wheeler!

The cab stopped; a man got out and disappeared in the shadows; then the cab drove on past him. He heaved a sigh of relief—just a man coming home in a cab. But the horse slowed and stopped a few rods ahead, and another man got out of the carriage. The driver turned his rig around and started back.

At the same instant he saw a big bruiser in a red sweater almost upon him. He was trapped—a man before and behind!

DESPERATELY he swept the empty street with his eyes as he leaped from the curb into the driveway. No help in sight—no use in shouting.

He sprang toward the Red Sweater as both men came on at a soft-footed run, sidestepped and swung for the jaw as the man slewed past. The red arms flew up, and the man rolled over on the ground.

While Mac was still feeling the satisfying crunch of fist on bone he dodged by instinct, just as a blow glanced from his head. The piece of wrapped lead pipe flew from the hand of assailant number two as Mac faced him, staggering a bit from the glancing sideswipe, and Mac followed him stupidly.

"Come on! Crack 'is nut!"

Number two growled the low call over his shoulder as he backed off, drawing Mac nearer to the carriage. The driver leaped from his seat, in his hand a lead-and-whalebone "life-preserver," and came on crouching. Mac jumped at number two and landed a smashing drive between his eyes that knocked him flat, just as the Red Sweater got him by the ankle and yanked his foot from under him.

Mac caught himself on all fours, kicked furiously and landed, got to his feet just in time to get a thump from the club that filled the air with swimming lights, and lashed out with a foot that landed soft.

In the instant that followed he saw through a swarm of stars black figures coming — struck and landed — heard a beastly snarl:

"—— —— him! Croak the —— ——!"

The blood-hungry rasp of it, with the unspeakably filthy epithet, roused him to a frenzy of desperate rage and horror. He lashed and swung — right — left — right — lifted a furious kick that was stopped by bone and brought a growl, saw the club lifted and dived into a clinch.

Dazed and tasting sulfur, he thrilled to the certainty that this was life or death—he growled in a bristling ecstasy of frantic, tearing rage as he set his teeth in a heavy arm—swung one man from his feet, raised him high to dash him down on the stones——

But that instant an arm whipped round his neck from behind, under his chin, and dragged him back—a knee bored his back, and the man he had raised came down on him. His neck was cracking—choking—Without forethought he kicked free in front, stamped on a prone body and leaped from it as a take-off—leaped high and desperately, throwing his weight backward and flinging his feet up and over his head in a back-somersault, doubling like a jack-knife in the air.

The garroter at his back went down with Mac on top, and Mac jerked his head free. He saw the man with the club above him, arm raised—flung his body sidewise at his legs, rolling the man beneath him over atop and under again—swept the clubman's feet from under him—and all three mixed in a snarling, scrambling pile.

Even as he fought like a wildcat with arms, teeth and legs, Mac was conscious that he was getting his second wind—actually wearing out his men—and realized that it must sound like a dog-fight. At that moment a blow landed on his temple and glanced to his shoulder, numbing one arm and half-stunning him.

With his good hand he fastened to a throat, hunched his head between his shoulders and burrowed his face in the body underneath.

Of a sudden the weight was snatched from his back—the man below him lay still—he was jerked over on his back, and struck out with his good arm.

His wrist was caught in a grip of velvet-steel. Wheeler's voice asked—

"Did they hurt you, Mac?"

With a long breath of grateful relief McLeod opened his eyes. A little way off one man was dragging another who seemed half-unconscious—dragging him to the cab and stuffing him through the door. The driver lashed the horse into a run and the cab careened round the corner.

"Mac! Are you hurt?"

Wheeler shook the bruised shoulder.

"That shoulder—and a bump——"

Mac put his hand to his head as Wheeler helped him to his feet. Then with a sobbing catch he whimpered—

"He—he s-said, 'Kill the—— ——!'"

"He did, eh?"

Wheeler's lips twitched, and he looked about him—at the vanishing cab and the motionless man on the ground.

"Well, you gave 'em a busy little session after you got in motion. But you want to *start* harder, boy! No rules in a street fight but 'Get the Best of It!' Use your feet *first* and use 'em fast—go to it as hard and nasty as you can and get nastier as you go! It's no parlor-game. Let's see what they did to you?"

With swift, deft fingers Wheeler went over Mac's head and limbs, as skilful as a surgeon and as gentle as a woman.

"Lucky! Only bruises—not even the collar-bone."

Even as he spoke he wiped the blood from Mac's face and tied the cut over his brow with a handkerchief. Then he kicked the man on the ground.

"Come on, you! Get up and talk!"

The body stirred feebly, and Dan lighted a match. Holding it down near the face, he could see the bloodshot eyes open and the slack mouth gasp twice for breath.

The staring eyeballs rolled up to Wheeler's face—blinked—opened wider with terror as the man jerked convulsively.

"Gug-Gawd! Dan—Dan Wheeler!"

Choked and hoarse:

"Don't croak me—I—I'll puke! I didn't—didn't know you was——"

"You bet you'll puke!" Wheeler broke in grimly. "Come clean! Where did you see me? You don't belong here."

"Chi.—Drake's," the yegg answered anxiously. "I swear I never knew you was in dis, or I'd seen 'im in——"

"Can the alibi!"

Wheeler stopped his protests.

"Get up! Who's paying you for this? Careful now!"

"Matty de Mick—guy dat drove de hack."

The creature looked over his shoulder as he got to his feet.

"I'm a stiff if you snitch on me. Fer ——'s sake——"

"Cut it *out!* Answer me, and then stop. Who hired Matty?"

"I ain't wise—only been here a week——"

"How much of a gang has he got?" Dan snapped.

"Ain't no reg'lar gang. He got me and Bull Murphy fer this, but we wasn't out to croak de lad. It was Matty said dat. Honest to——"

The croaking voice rose as Dan stopped it with a raised hand.

"That'll be all. One thing more: Where does Matty hang out?"

"Back of Grady's—on de Bowery."

It came in a hoarse whisper, and the poor yegg shivered as he added hopelessly:

"And dat's my finish! I croak before I c'n make de ferry."

"You stand still—right there," Wheeler said and turned to Mac.

"Who was it said that—what you told me, Mac? Was it this one, d'you think?"

"No—he was down," Mac said promptly. "It was the driver—with the club."

"Matty! Yes—Matty! Now Matty shouldn't talk so!" Wheeler murmured softly, and his eyes flared like a cat's in the dark.

He swung slowly toward the yegg, who stood twisting his hands.

"Should he talk like that?" he asked sweetly.

"No—quit! Don't! Please!" whimpered the wretch, throwing up his elbow as if to ward the flame from Dan's long green eyes. "I ain't in it! I didn't——"

"Here! Take this! Jump the rattler in Jersey City Yard at 12:30—and you will be in Washington, D. C., by daylight. Don't show this side North River again. Get me?"

"T-T-Tanks!" the yegg whispered, cautiously reaching out a trembling hand for the bill.

When he got it he took one look at the figure on it and seemed galvanized into life. He stood up straighter, and his voice came stronger as he rasped:

"Say! Dey got you right, Dan Wheeler! You're a prince! You're—you're—you're *square!* I c'n lick de man dat says you ain't. Any time you want——"

"Scat—beat it!" with a smooth wave of the hand.

The man vanished as he stood, without his hat, and Wheeler turned to McLeod.

"No, Matty shouldn't talk so—it's not nice."

He resumed in the same soft, purring tone:

"We must tell Matty about that. It looks as if we had stubbed our toe on something solid this time, Mac. Let's drill!"

He started off toward Broadway, walking with his swift, effortless stride that made McLeod labor to keep up and talking as he went. At his next word he resumed his usual voice, slightly hoarse with a virile thrill in it:

"Speaking of stubbing our toes—I fumbled that one, right! The driver of the cab I got was deaf, the son of a gun. I ought to have found that out—and I did, after he had carried me a block past Nineteenth. I came on my feet the rest of the way, and I was almost too late. It won't happen again, and I am sorry—all my fault. Why don't *you* tell me about it?"

"You came just in time. I am all right. But why did you give that man so much money?"

"Matty the Mick is mean—he'd croak the poor gook," Wheeler muttered. "And it pays to keep a name for treating your friends right. No telling when some cheap yegg like that may be able to help you out of a hole—or put you in one—and money comes easy.

"Now we will find a cab-driver with ears on his head and things inside it; then we pay Matty the Mick a little call. Matty knows me—we were kids together, more or less—and he should be more careful!"

Mac shivered at the tone of the last three words, and hurried until he was panting like a small dog to keep abreast with his companion. For the moment Dan appeared to have forgotten him.

LUCK was with them this time. They reached Broadway just as a hansom cab came rolling up-town. The white horse was jogging along comfortably, close to the curb. The driver sat asleep on his perch, whip in hand, and the lash of the whip dragged on the sidewalk at Dan's feet. Wheeler never paused in his stride, but stepped forward to the curb, seized the whip and shouted—

"Whoa!"

At the same time he jerked the whip out of the hands of the driver, who swayed precariously on his seat, and prodded him upright with the butt as he called:

"Wake up, Jasper! Are you dead drunk?"

The driver sprawled on the cab-roof as the horse stopped, regained his upright position with an effort and spoke with much dignity:

"I am not, but I have hopes—the night is still young. Re-tur-rn me whip!"

"Want to earn a ten in an hour?" asked Dan, encouraged by the Cork accent and the solemn face with its long upper lip. There was an answering twinkle in the Donnybrook blue eyes as Dan added—

"I'd pay a premium for real brains."

"That means twinty, for thim is the kind I'm afther usin'. Don't be askin' fool questions—tell it me and climb in!" said the driver quickly.

"You know Matty the Mick's place—back of Grady's saloon?" Wheeler asked.

"I do well that same, an' it's all off! Matty licked me brother Jawn—his fri'nd is none of mine. I'd thank ye for me whip!"

"But I'm looking for Matty to tell him something—and you can ring up an ambulance while you wait!" Wheeler said in a confidential whisper. "Can we get to him without going through the bar? And is there a back way out?"

"That's different—more power t'ye! Ye

can, and there is," was the prompt answer. "Go in be the Sundah dure an the side-street, where the kids rush the can, soak him wan f'r me, and make y'r egsit be the back yar-rd av the shootin'-gallery next dure—ye land in the alley ferninst the gallery, and I'll be waitin' f'r ye at the mouth of that same. Ye still have me whip."

"You're my man. Listen! Leave us one block this side the saloon, then drive to the mouth of the alley *headed down-town*, and wait. *Have* you it, *right?*"

"*Have* I? Pile in, and I'd be obliged f'r the loan av me whip. Would a pair av brass knucks be any good to ye at all?"

"Thanks, no—here's your whip. Does Matty carry a gun?"

Dan paused on the step.

"Whin he's home he l'aves it in the dhrawer av the table beside um. He shoots fr'm the hip left-handed—and watch out f'r his hoofs! Ye're apt to get a boot in y'r bread-basket anny time at all. Ye're a gentleman!"

The last was acknowledgment of the bill Dan handed him in advance. They rattled off down-town, across Fourteenth to the Bowery, and down-town again at a speed that the white horse did not seem to possess at first sight. Wheeler pointed out some places where things had happened to him, and because of him, on the way. He acted like a man out on a sight-seeing trip with many pleasures in prospect. He referred to the object of their trip only once:

"This Matty the Mick sketch just shows you never can tell! When I picked you up down-town I didn't have anything like this on the program, and here we are—heading right into something that may land us anywhere, just because somebody wants you out of the way. You don't know who it is—or anything?"

"Not an idea. I thought it was you they were shadowing," Mac answered.

"No—this is another game entirely, and it looks like a big one. That Central Office dick was pestering around to get me mixed up in the hunt for the Spark Gang Guy. And here we are!"

The cab had stopped, and the driver informed them cautiously:

"That's Grady's on the corner, the shootin'-gallery is next beyant, and the alley comes out beyant that. I'll be waitin' there. Will I wait f'r orders whin ye come out on the run, I dunno?"

"Good boy, Seumas!"

Dan nodded approval.

"If we seem to be in a hurry, whip up as we climb in and drive round the next block. If we are not followed, take us to the corner of Pell Street. If we are, use the butt of your whip."

"Right ye are—good luck!"

He drove on to take up his station, leaving them to walk the last block.

It was still evening in the heart of the Bowery. Saloon-doors swung, glasses clinked, bowling-alleys rumbled and crashed, in the shooting-gallery rifles cracked and targets clanged. The sidewalks were still alive with square-jawed toughs, sports, pedlers, women of the streets. People in corduroy and colored shawls chattered hoarse foreign tongues, screaming and gesticulating. Nobody seemed to notice anybody else, yet the air was thick with life's exudate, boiling with the reaction of human elements.

Grady's was bright with lights and mirrors, the windows filled with bottles in pyramids, and its half-doors swung busily to the stream of traffic. On the floor above a sign announced a "Sparring Academy," but the windows were darkened by thick shades—there was something menacing about its quiet.

Moreover, Wheeler called Mac's attention to the bearded foreigners that entered the doorway giving on the stairs that led to the "Sparring Academy."

"Whiskers and dynamite! Smell 'em? Phew! Can't tell me they get that in one lifetime—they hand it down for generations, that smell! I give those cattle a wide berth. I like 'em like rattlesnakes and bedbugs. I don't guess even Matty would mix with that bunch.

"And speaking of Matty—some of his gang might be with him, and you ought to have a gun. Can you hit anything with a Colt .45?"

"I used to—squirrels," Mac answered modestly.

"Good enough! The lad with the rifles has got on a real Stetson—maybe he has got his own private iron. He'll loan it if he's from the plains—and he sure looks like it. Wait!"

They had passed the saloon, and Wheeler stepped up to the counter behind which the man in the broad-brimmed hat was cleaning a Winchester in a quiet interval of business. Dan looked at the brown, capable hands a moment, then leaned over to ask—

"Would you loan or rent your own six-gun for the evening?"

The broad hat did not lift to show the man's face until he had finished and laid aside the rifle, cleaned and loaded, with neat caution. Then he looked up, a broad smile on his bronzed face, to say quietly—

"Anything I got is yours, Dan!"

"Lem Duffield! Put it there—this is one of Those Nights!" Wheeler said, clapping palms with an old friend. "Huc-come you in New York, Lem? This is Mac—shake hands with a pretty scrapper, Lem!"

"Always glad to," Lem said as he took McLeod's hand. "Oh, I got clawed up by a tame grizzly, dude-wrangling in the Yellowstone, and it stopped my riding for a spell. But I'm going back next month with enough to start a little herd of my own. Where are you living?"

"Grand Union—come around tomorrow. How about that gun?"

"Both, if you want 'em. No? I'll shut up shop and trail along with the other one if you've got room in the argument?" Lem proposed hopefully.

"No, thanks. It's just for looks, mostly," Dan declined the offer. "Mac is going to hold it in plain sight while I tell a man around the corner a few things. I don't look for any gun-play. See you tomorrow!"

"So long! I'll be listening." Lem waved a good-by.

"He will too," Dan commented as he slipped the gun out of sight and walked Mac back to the corner. "If we get into a shooting scrape, Lem's nose will lead him to it."

They sauntered round the corner, took advantage of a lull in the foot traffic to reach the rear door and found it open a crack. Pulling Mac inside, Wheeler closed the door behind him. The dim hallway was empty, and Dan gave quick instructions:

"Take this rod and hold it in sight—so. Don't shoot unless I am down, or holler, 'Let go!' Use your own judgment then, whether to bend the barrel on their heads or drill 'em in the legs. No killing if we can help it. I aim to play this alone. I am going to *show Matty something!*"

He did not raise his voice on the last three words, but they came out with a sharp, vivid emphasis that made shivers run up McLeod's back. This was Sled Wheeler—the killer!

Was he really going to kill this Matty the Mick? McLeod felt a hysterical impulse to laugh—or to take to his heels in panic.

Dan was watching him with eyes that seemed again to flare green in the dim light, but he suddenly whispered:

"All set! On your toes—keep two paces back, and come on!"

And Mac found he was tiptoeing after him along the narrow passage, calmed to quiet acceptance of the situation although he ached from head to foot with weariness and bruises. He even felt as if he were absorbing something of the electric energy radiated by the man before him, who moved ahead with the lithe silence of a leopard creeping for a spring.

WHEELER reached the door at the end of the passage, listened for a second, threw it wide and stepped in—Mac stepped softly after him.

The small room was lighted by one gas-jet. Two tables were cluttered with wet beer-glasses and pink *Police Gazettes*, but only one chair was occupied. A heavy-set thug in a red sweater sat squinting in a pocket mirror, feeling a black eye and a thick, split lip.

The Red Sweater was evidently a sort of doorkeeper of the sanctum beyond, or a bodyguard of the leader who had just come in. The gangster heaved himself up with a surly growl.

"Here! Where the —— you think you're goin'?"

And he kicked back his chair as he got to his feet, shooting out his jaw toward Wheeler, who was moving straight for the door at the far side of the room. Next he flung aside the heavy table, clearing the chairs away with its sweep.

"To see Matty."

Wheeler spoke quietly without turning his head, hand on the door-knob.

The bruiser lunged for Wheeler with a grunting epithet, foolishly filthy——

"Y' —— —— son of a ——"

*Smack!*

Sharp and heavy came the crunching impact of Wheeler's fist on the man's jaw. McLeod stood back at the sight. As the thug came lunging at him Dan had flung wide the door, leaping aside to a crouch from which he rebounded—snapped his body straight from heel to fist like a steel spring—catching the brute on the lunge as he passed with a terrific smash that lifted the bulky body clear of the floor as it passed through the open door. Full four yards it sailed with the aid of its own impetus, turning over smoothly in the air, and landed with a crashing thud. Breaking a chair in its fall and flopping on the floor, it slid to the very feet of the gang leader himself, who sprang up from a table at the far side of the inner room.

For five seconds Matty the Mick stood looking down at the still form of his henchman, flung broken and senseless at his feet. One side of the ugly face and jaw-bone was crumpled in, and from the thick lips blood welled in a dark stream that glistened where it spread on the boards.

"——! What a wallop!" whispered Matty the Mick.

Slowly he turned his flat, pasty face; and his light-gray eyes, hard and meanly close-set, crept from the crushed face across the floor and up to Wheeler, to see what manner of man had delivered that blow.

"Good evening, Matty!"

Wheeler stepped forward, hand outheld. There was no attempt at flippancy or cheeriness in Wheeler's tone. His clean-cut features stood out, keen and hard, and his narrowed eyes gleamed a merciless threat as Dan took two slow steps toward the gang leader. Matty drew back as he met Dan's eyes—his own looking furtively from Wheeler's grim features to the shapely hand, then back again:

"Keep off!" rasped the tough guy. "You beat me up when I was a kid, but you don't work that again!"

"Don't touch the gun, Matty!"

Wheeler did not raise his voice, but Matty's stealthy hand stopped on its way to the table drawer. His heel pushed back his chair as he slowly backed away, and he darted a look at the gun in Mac's hand. He licked his dry lips and swallowed hard. His dull brain was useless from fright—fright of the unknown; for he didn't know what was coming.

"Shake hands, Matty."

Wheeler's command was cool and confident, and he took a catlike step forward, holding Matty with the benumbing glitter in his level green eyes.

Slowly Matty's right hand came forward—jerkily, as if moved by hidden strings; unwillingly, while his flat face turned more pasty-white, until it met Dan's firm, handsome fingers. Then Wheeler gripped the gangster's fingers in a crunching grip that made a noise. With the grisly cracking and the start of pain that shot through Matty's arm the big tough snarled:

"Quit! Whatcha want? Leggo!"

"Matty, you said, 'Croak the —— ——!' meaning *my friend* here. You can't get away with a thing like that, Matty. Tell him you're sorry, and do it now!"

It was rather wonderful to hear Wheeler's quiet, level tones, to see him standing easily poised on his heels, while Matty hunched and grimaced under the crushing grip of of his fingers. Matty's fingertips, already black and oozing blood around the nails, bore witness to the strange power of Wheeler's shapely white hand. Matty's face was beaded with sweat.

"I'm sorry—I didn't mean it. That's enough—leggo!" grunted Matty.

Wheeler simply ceased to increase the pressure as he said more sternly:

"Right! Don't ever touch him, or any friend of mine, again. Lay off him! Now who paid you for this job, Matty? Who is behind this?"

"None of your —— business— Leggo! I—e-e-eeg!"

Matty finished with a squeal of pain wrenched out of him by the sudden grinding twist that Wheeler gave his big paw.

"Don't be cruel, Matty! Tell your old friend Dan!" Wheeler urged kindly.

And the writhing gangster, humped over his tortured right, clawed with his left hand to free it. Two of his left fingers were instantly clipped, in Dan's left and jerked backward at a sharp angle—his forearms were crossed, and he was held powerless.

"Who did you say, Matty?" Wheeler prompted.

"I—I dunno! I never saw his face!" Matty gasped explosively, his scared face bent over his suffering hands in foolish anxiety.

He groaned and grunted:

"Sent for me—he did. Ow-w! Under Russian Consulate—down-cellar I see him—he was masked! U-UG! 'S all I know—s'help me God! —— —— you! Quit!"

All this time the gangster had struggled and sputtered, half-unconscious of his own ludicrous subjection and the silly figure he was cutting. Now as the blood ran from under his blackened nails and he heard the ligaments crack he reacted more desperately.

' Sure that's all you know, Matty?"

Wheeler barked the query sharply. Before Matty could move, Dan let go his left, drew Matty's right forearm over his own left arm and bore down on the hand—an old and deadly leverage under which the victim must rise bodily in the air or have his elbow burst backward. It brought Matty to his toes—again surprized.

"That right, Matty? Expect me to swallow that stuff?" Wheeler persisted.

"Yes—yes! 'S right! A-A-Ah—ug! Yes —— —— you! A-A-Ah!"

At last came the revolt. Wild with pain, Matty's mean face flashed into a vicious grin of rage as he failed to rise higher to the killing leverage of his crunching elbow-joint. With a squealing grunt he launched a kick at Wheeler's belly. He wore heavy, sharp-toed shoes specially sharpened for him, and his kick came with all the power of fear-born rage. It would have been final if it had gone home, but it did not.

Dan met it with an upward cross-body jerk of his bended knee. The gangster's shin-bone, low down where it is tender, met Wheeler's a bit below the knee where it is tough and solid. It is a trick of Jap wrestling that requires some practise—ungraceful but effective.

There was the dull crack of breaking bone. Matty's face went blankly whiter as he hopped and toppled sidewise to the table—flopped on it moaning. Only for an instant, and he was up and grimacing again, hopping on one foot as Dan levered him up with his merciless arm-hold.

"Not polite to sit down, Matty!" said Dan. "Sure you're not lying to me? Or do you want some more? I haven't begun my bag of tricks yet. *Come clean!*" And with the last sharp command he bore down viciously.

"Ye-eh! Y-Yes!" bleated the tough. "I did—I— A-A-Ah— E! E! E-E-Eeg!"

Matty's attempt to yell for help ended in a hoarse squeal and a breathy grunt as he collapsed on the chair behind him. At the same moment, with a fine grisly crackling the elbow ligaments gave way. The arm bent impossibly backwards as the heavy body dropped to the chair—tipped against the table—and the head lolled loosely on one shoulder, mouth agape. Matty had fainted.

The injured arm lay across the table-top, bent back supinely, and the burst finger-tips dripped blood squarely on the caved-in face of the unconscious thug in the red sweater. Matty's broken leg trailed out along the floor in the opposite direction, bent outward and twisted. McLeod looked at the two broken and unconscious men, and felt sick at his stomach.

Wheeler stepped forward and pulled back a lid from one of Matty's closed eyes, delicately touched the eyeball and stood up with a little exclamation of surprize.

"Hm! No fake about it—he really fainted. I thought he'd have more sand."

He said to Mac quietly:

"I wanted to leave no doubt in his mind that he was to let you entirely alone. If I can find some paper I'll leave a note."

He deliberately opened the table drawer at Matty's side and took out an envelop and a stub of pencil. Bending over the table, almost touching Matty's face, he wrote in his fine, clear hand—

Lay off my friend McLeod or I shall call again.
D. W.

Leaving the envelop where it would catch Matty's opening eyes, Wheeler took the gangster's gun from the drawer, examined it and put it back in the drawer before closing it.

"Well, Mac, we may as well go."

He spoke as if he rather wished to linger, as he looked about the room.

"Matty was a live kid once—he's lost his grip. Too much booze and women, I suppose. He lies right down."

Dan stepped to the door behind the table and opened it to look out into the back yard next door, then turned back with a twitch of his thin lips.

"Pity to waste all this stage-setting."

He waved a hand at the room they were leaving. Mac turned to look, drawn by the fascination of disgust.

Matty's broken and twisted leg still trailed out along the floor, like the extremity of a scarecrow. His bent-back arm still reached across the table as if in dumb appeal—the blood had stopped dripping from the fingers.

The thug in the red sweater still lay where he had been flung by Dan's blow, but his caved-in face was twitching. Even while Mac looked, one red-sweatered arm drew up and pushed feebly at the floor—slipped and spread abroad the slippery pool of blood—tried and slipped again, while the broken jaw moved to a low mumble. McLeod turned to flee in sick panic.

"Wait! Let me take the gun—I want to call them from in front."

Wheeler took the Colt from Mac's hand and aimed it at the ceiling. Two crashing reports fairly split Mac's ears in the small room; but above the ringing in his ears he could hear the crash of overturned chairs in the saloon—the distant sound of many feet, drumming near and louder. Then he was out—through the passage—in a dark back yard—and Wheeler was dragging him through a litter of boxes and barrels to a hole in a high board fence.

As they came out of the alley into the light of the street McLeod saw that Dan was quietly chuckling.

"Too bad 'Brother Jawn' couldn't see that tableau back there," said he.

### III

MAC was feeling too sick and tired to answer, and he did not give heed to Dan's short tale to the interested cabman. When he climbed in he shrank away from contact with Dan's shoulder.

Worn out from lack of sleep and three days of starving misery, in the reaction from excitement and his violent struggle, he was abnormally sore and sensitive. He could see the maimed gangsters in the room where Wheeler had left them—he knew he should see them in nightmares; and he shrank from the man beside him who could coldly mangle men like that—and then laugh at it!

And it had gone too far. What was the sense in crunching all a man's bones when he was helpless? It was monstrous cruelty! Stiff and aching, he sat apart and closed his eyes. He was startled to hear Wheeler answering his thoughts:

"If I hadn't broke that crook *right*, he'd had another whack at you—I know 'em and you don't! I know, it was my fault in the first place, but you're sore and strung up. You'll feel different when you get a good sleep—snooze now if you want to."

Not a word about what would have happened if Dan had not arrived in time. Mac recalled two shanghaied English sailors he had seen, drugged and bloody, washed off with a hose on the lower deck. Wheeler had saved him from that. He was swept by a revulsion of feeling and regret. He wanted to apologize——

"Whoa!" came booming from the driver overhead.

The hansom stopped abruptly. The driver was leaning far over and shouting to somebody in the street:

"Hey there, Reginald—swim out! Ye're lost in the fog. Swim ashore before Napoleon steps on ye! There goes yer lid!"

McLeod opened his eyes and beheld strange things in the street before him. Close in front of the cab-wheel and almost under the white horse, on the rough stones of the pavement, rolled a beautiful silk hat. After the hat staggered a hatless and beautiful young man. He was in the evening-dress of the upper ten and his open Inverness cape showed a spotless shirt-front. His tie was under one ear. His young mustached face was pale and tragic—his mode of progression unique.

He stalked stiffly and rigidly upright, tilting back on his heels at times; yet he reached one arm waveringly in the direction of the fugitive hat, fingers vaguely grasping air. Plainly he had some notion that he was about to pick up the hat, yet feared to bend over lest he pitch on his face. Said face, moreover, seemed as stiff as it was sad and pale.

"Wandering drunk," commented Wheeler. "Hi there, neighbor, back up! Come about and climb on the sidewalk!"

The youth came about with a wabbling lurch and gazed up in the general direction of the cab. His glassy eyes were focused on infinity. Sadly he gazed and, gazing, sadly he spake.

"Ca-an't sh-*sthay* on sidewalk!" he wailed.

Some words he blurred, some he enunciated over-clearly, and anon he delicately masked a hiccup with a well-gloved hand.

"S-S-dewalk sh-*shplits!* S-S-dewalk sh-sphlits in the mi'lle—in the m— Ic! (beg pardon) in the mid-dul, and goes off, diff-rent ways—li' that!" waving both arms apart vaguely. " 'S sad! 'S all very s— Ic! (beg pardon) very sad!"

Two bitter tears rolled down his pale young cheeks as he turned away, conceding hopelessly—

"But, try 't ag— Ic! (pardon me) try 't again 'f you say so."

Thereupon he lifted a foot and began to tread high and heavily on his heels, progressing not at all but rotating slowly on his own axis in a species of solemn bear-dance.

"A-Ah! A fake!" pronounced the driver on his perch up above. "A stage-drunk he has on 'um—they don't be hiccupin' anny place else!"

He spoke in a disgusted undertone at the end; but the cruel words went home. The young man faced about with the dignity of a great sorrow and administered reproof.

"Tha' 's unkind—unkindest cut 'f all! Las' crushing bl— Ic! (beg pardon) crushing blow 'f Fate. Sidewalk sh-shplits—hat a-all gone—now man up 'bove says 'm Mis-able Fake! How sharper'n a serpent's tail 't is—t' be m— Ic! (pardon me) t' be mis-under-shtood! An' he *won't come down!* Never any more! I wan' *to go home!*"

With this passionate climax he lifted his voice. Then, closing his tear-dimmed eyes, he raised his blind face to the pitiless skies. Standing thus, he lifted up his voice in song, swaying gently back against the white horse and leading an imaginary orchestra with both hands.

"Ta-*ake* me back to home and m— Ic! (pardon me) home and mu-huh-*ther*—I ham weary wand'ring he-e-*ere!*

"F-o-*or* on earth there his no uh-huh-*ther!*

"Spo-o-*ot* to me-e-e! That is s— Ic! (pardon me) so-o-o de-e-*ear!*"

Refreshed, he opened his eyes to see the hansom for the first time as a vehicle, apparently. For he reached for the hand-rail, felt for the step with a wayward patent-leather pump, what time he demanded admittance tunefully as one having authority.

"Glad you c— Ic! (beg pardon) glad you came for me, Gaston. O-pen the gates an' lemme in! Home, Gaston! O-O-O-pen! O-O-O-O-O-pen! O-O-O-pen the gates! Hof the teh-h— Ic! (pardon me) hof the teh-hem-pul!'

He was in great voice, oratorio-style, now. And he would have climbed over the apron into the cab if Wheeler had not taken him in tow.

"Wrong pew, neighbor! No room in here."

Dan got down and supported the wanderer by one arm.

"Here's your hat!" picking up the silk hat and pulling it firmly down to the ears. "And here comes a sea-going hack—let's board her. Well? What's your address?"

"Who—me?"

The impressario tugged at his headpiece to get it off.

"'S too—too t-*ight!* Too darn t-*ight!* Can't get 't off—ne'm mind! You mean—wh— Ic! (pardon me) where do I live? Live 'n this hat a while now—I shouldn't wonder. Tha's joke! Pardon me! Me? Live some place—ask Piet. He knows. H'lo, Piet!"

And he waved a vague hand toward the carriage which had pulled up near by of its own accord.

From the carriage stepped Piet Van Twiller, who hailed the prodigal with relief in his tone.

"Hi, Reggie! Come home, you red Injun! Where did you leave mother's carriage? She'll lay you out!

"And Dan Wheeler— Mac, is that you? Great cat! This is some party—shake hands all round! What—who—and where? No use! Too many questions to ask in one night. Where did you pick up this pickled lemon?"

Piet shook hands all round with genuine delight and proceeded to apologize for the lost one.

"Reggie is a good Indian after he passes the scrapping stage and gets to singing Home and Mother. When he's sober his name is Reginald Willing. This certainly is some party!"

("I knew it—so I did" *Sotto voce*'d the hansom-driver.)

"Party—whose party?" Reggie inquired, bristling suddenly. "'S my party! I foun' these g— Ic! (pardon) gen'lemen. Very nice gen'lemen. They like my voice, an' I li' them—all but gen'leman up 'bove. He called me Stage Drunk, but did *not* come down. I hadn't done a thing to him."

"I did *not* come down!" the driver assented emphatically. "And 't was there I showed me good sinse. That same lad didn't do a thing t' me, three weeks come nixt Wi'nsdah night! Put me to sleep wit a right swing on the ear, he did so! Ye're right I did not come down—me, wit' a family to suppoort!"

"Reggie *is* deceptive in his cups," Piet explained to his old friends. "He packs a sure-fire knockout in his right paw as long as he can keep on his feet. But I must get him home—his mother will be worrying. She usually has a batch of fines to pay, for the people Reggie puts to sleep. But if he's been singing he is safe.

"Get in the carriage with Piet, Reggie. That's the boy—a little higher. *Up*-sy daisy! There you are—sit still like a good boy.

"Where can I find you fellows? You've seen your uncle, Mac, of course? Go in the morning—he's mighty anxious to find you. Grand Union? See you later then. So long!"

There was a brief argument in the cab-door as Reggie suddenly remembered the man who had so cravenly refused to come down; then Piet got him stowed away and drove off with him in triumph. The crowd that had lined the curbs began to melt away, discussing the incident in various languages. The driver of the hansom asked:

"Will I drive to Pell Street now, I dunno? Half-past two o'clock?"

McLeod sat shivering in the cab, and Wheeler got in as he deliberated aloud to his silent companion:

"I was going to see the richest gentleman in Chinatown. I don't care about half-past two, but I'd like to know if Brine's man has caught up with us. I had him shaken until we ran into Reggie's circus."

McLeod mastered his disgust, which was on him again, enough to ask:

"Wouldn't he be asleep? Don't they ever sleep?"

He was half-asleep himself.

"No—he knows I'm coming, and it's rather important. I'll take a chance."

Dan called up to the man from Cork—

"Yes—let 'er go!"

As they rolled on down the Bowery Dan kept silence for a short time; then he harked back to the cause of Mac's sickness.

"When you know more about a crook like Matty, you'll learn it won't do to slap his wrist. Besides I told you we have butted into something solid. I don't know just what—maybe Huen Ling can put us wise."

The cab rumbled on.

From up above came the anxious query—

"Will he go to hawspittle?" also referring to Matty the Mick.

"He will," Wheeler answered.

"God bless ye!" said the cabman. "Remember me number; me name is McNamara."

In order that the waiting cab might not attract attention Wheeler dismissed it a block above Pell Street, and they entered Chinatown afoot—McLeod stiff and sore, inside and out. The Celestials were astir even at this anemic hour; the narrow foreign streets were spicy with heathen smells, and their denizens shuffled about their various duties, following customs and pursuits that were old when the Pyramids were building. They gave no sign of seeing their American visitors, and McLeod, chilled and dizzy with sleep, felt like a forlorn spirit walking invisible. He wanted to escape—to get away from the horror and cruelty of the man who was dragging him into—into what?

## IV

*HUEN LING, Importer.*

The sign was in English on the window of plate-glass. An up-and-down sign in Chinese characters was on the doorpost, and in the window was a gilt dragon. The door was open; and inside, behind a low counter, a round-faced Chinese youth sat working with a blow-pipe on a piece of gold filigree. His puffed-out cheeks shone with the reflection of the blue flame.

As they entered, the goldsmith laid down his tools and came to the black-velvet-covered counter. He looked at them in grave silence.

"My name is Wheeler. Huen Ling expects me," said Dan.

The smooth round face of the Celestial became instantly alert and smiling. With a graceful gesture of welcome and deference the young man bowed and said in flawless English—

"Follow me, please."

And as he turned toward the rear of the small shop he clucked a quick word in Chinese which snatched a smaller Chinaman from behind a curtain to take his place in the shop.

Down a long, curtained passage they followed this guide, who seemed in no hurry. He even paused to call their attention to rooms on either side, all lighted and filled with rich goods from the East—lacquered furniture and delicate porcelains, ivory and gold brocade, ancient armor and curios. Mac began to feel like a drugged *Aladdin*, rather frightened by the wealth on all sides of him. The very air of the place breathed culture and refinement—a culture ancient and serene.

At the end of the passage their guide mounted several broad steps, parted some heavy curtains and stood aside with a low bow for them to enter unannounced.

A tall man rose from a couch at the far side of a room of much magnificence, a bland and dignified giant in long robes which were parted and swung open, showing the Yellow Girdle of ancient nobility. He wore a round cap, and as he strode forward to meet them he furled aside an ivory fan with a familiar grace. The bigness and quiet power of the man freed the scene from any hint of extravagance or stage-craft. He spoke with the purest American accent:

"You come just in time, Mr. Wheeler. I have been out on business that concerns both of you—if this is Mr. Stuart McLeod. Yes, I see the family resemblance."

As he spoke he took their hands in turn with a quick, firm pressure. As he loosed Mac's he gave him a second look.

"I see you are tired—be seated and drink tea while I talk with your friend."

The fragrant tea was already put before him, and Mac found himself relaxed on soft cushions, listening to their host's low voice.

"Mr. McLeod has not seen his uncle? And you have not decided to undertake the task—to take the job? I looked for you before."

Dan colored slowly at the suggestion of reproach, but he sat down and sipped tea before speaking.

"No. He didn't see the ad until tonight, and I didn't know who he was. I have not seen Brine—or the other man, whoever he is. I don't work well under a boss, and I wanted to find out some things first."

Dan was not either apologetic or truculent, but quietly firm.

"Then," he went on, "somebody tried to put Mac out of the way, and I had to stop that. I had to show them something right at the start."

"Where and when?" Huen Ling asked quickly.

"Nineteenth Street. Two hours or so ago. It looked bad."

Wheeler's eyes glittered and narrowed as he went on:

"I went to Matty the Mick. He wasn't wise, but I got what dope he had. He claimed it was a masked man, under the Russian Consulate, who set him on. It sounds fishy."

The merchant gave the matter due consideration before he said:

"It was probably a mistake. It should not happen again."

Wheeler shook his head tightly, and his host went on:

"This matter of finding the diamond-thief has been complicated by another and more obscure difficulty within twenty-four hours. Before I tell you the latest development I should like to know how you look at the offer made to you."

To McLeod, listening acutely now, it seemed as if Wheeler were another man. He spoke as pure English as the Chinese gentleman himself as he told his brief story:

"Brine wrote to me, asking me to come here; but he said nothing more. I had an idea he had heard of the diamond affair in 'Frisco, and wanted to get me on this one.

"Then Lu Yan asked me to look into it as a favor to him, since I was coming to New York anyway, so I kept out of sight when I got here. I knew I'd stand a better chance of learning something that way, but everything seemed to be smooth and tight—not a seam anywhere. It's a smooth operator at the head of this business.

"Yesterday I saw Alan McLeod out driving with his ward—the Kentucky beauty, Miss Mason—and in the afternoon I stumbled on Mac here. He looked like a thoroughbred—the sort of man I wanted to help me on the diamond-hunt—and I was feeling lonely anyhow. So I asked him to eat with me.

"As soon as he was shaved I noticed the 'family resemblance' you spoke of, and I saw things were doubling up on me. Then after the theater they tried the kidnaping stunt, and I went to remonstrate with Matty. That's all so far."

Huen Ling looked at the cold lines of Dan's finely chiseled lips as he finished. He smiled a little himself as he remarked:

"I imagine Matty will not trouble your friend again, from what I have heard of your methods. Probably you are more disposed to undertake the task than when you arrived—even though you have learned little?"

"If my friends are mixed up in it—yes," Dan answered promptly. "I can use the money, if it's worth while, but I can do better work when I'm hot in the collar."

And he smiled grimly.

"You will not lack for personal incentive," Huen Ling said positively. "But let me tell you the complications, for there are two. First of all the problem was simply to find and catch the clever diamond-thief, and the first complications is— Pardon me!"

He got up and went to a curtain, where he spoke a word to unseen attendants, then made the round of the room, making sure that nobody was within hearing, before resuming his seat and his talk.

"—a secret that must be kept close. It has been discovered that certain papers are missing—papers of more value than all the stolen jewels—and it is believed that they are in the possession or under the control of the arch-thief, the man at the head of the Spark Gang. In fact the bare threat of exposure of these papers has set in motion the entire diplomatic circle at Washington."

"Who threatened to expose 'em?" Dan asked as Huen Ling paused for effect. "And what are the papers?"

"That is the very heart of the secret," said Huen Ling. "That is what must not come out—the nature of those papers; but the thief must not be taken unless and until the papers are taken with him. That order comes from the Commissioner of Police himself."

"How will anybody know the right papers?" Wheeler asked, frowning. "And what is the sense in that? Are you sure?"

"It is sure that the Government and the embassies fear the exposure of the papers in case they are not captured with the thief, or *before!*"

Huen Ling solemnly impressed the fact:

"Fear it so much that they have sent on a special representative to identify and destroy those papers in case they are found. I have seen and talked with him. You may take that fact as assured."

"Good enough! What then?" asked Dan. "What's the other complication?"

"The other is perhaps not so much a complication as an incentive, for you. Did you know that Alan McLeod was a close friend, years ago, of *your* friend and instructor, Slater?"

"I have heard Slater speak of him, yes. That was why——"

Wheeler's hoarse voice stopped, and in his eyes there came a distant look that seemed to impress the man before him. For after a pause Huen Ling said in a lower tone:

"Then I do not need to add my argument? You will do your best without it?"

"I'll get him."

Dan's hoarse whisper roused McLeod, who had not understood half of what he had heard, from his stupor of fatigue. It was charged with sudden and unnatural venom. With no apparent reason Wheeler was viciously in earnest all at once. He repeated softly:

"I'll get him if we both live. But what's *your* reason?"

Huen Ling waited a moment, looking Wheeler significantly in the eyes, before he said in a tone so low that Mac could hardly hear it—

"It is now your duty."

Those were the last words McLeod heard. He remembered them afterward—recalled listening closely to hear them; then, disappointed and uncomprehending, he saw Wheeler sit for some seconds unmoving, making no response at all.

For himself, he had reached his limit of endurance. After three days without food and almost without sleep, he was fed and warm, luxuriously comfortable. And this, with the reaction from the strain of the night's activities, was now too much for him. His will could no longer control his brain or his heavy eyelids; and with the closing of his eyes he was instantly asleep.

Half-roused and stupidly protesting, he was conscious of being carried a great distance in some discomfort. Somebody was pulling off his clothes, rolling him into cold water—no, it was a cool, soft bed which sailed off and down and away most pleasantly. Some time later he awoke with a great thirst—asked for water, drank and slept again.

HE OPENED his eyes in broad daylight, to find himself in bed in the three-room suite at the Grand Union. He could hear Wheeler splashing and whistling in the bath-room, and through his open window he could see the morning sun gilding the cornice of the Murray Hill Hotel across the street.

It was pleasant to lie luxuriously listening to the rumble of wheels in the street below, broken by the double clang of the surface cars as they stopped or started, leaving or entering the Park Avenue tunnel. The curtains of the window swayed in the wind; and Dan surely could whistle! He listened to the flute-like volume of tone, true in the middle of the note, with amazement. The man had the music!

"Slept long enough?"

Dan stood in the door toweling a fresh-shaven face, and he paused to shoot a keen look into Mac's face from the long, level eyes that looked like amber in the morning light. McLeod knew what that look meant. Wheeler was looking for any sign of disgust or dislike such as Mac was now ashamed of having showed the night before. So he sat up in bed and grinned most attractively—

"I could sleep more, but I want to eat worse."

"Roll out then, and shake it up or you eat alone," Wheeler warned him cheerfully. "Want yours cold or warm?"

"Cold, thank you."

So as Dan started the water rushing in the tub, then came out to inspect his shave at the long pier-glass between the windows, Mac stretched delightfully and started for his plunge, and all was well between them. But half-way across the middle room Mac paused to announce abruptly—

"I am sorry I acted like such a fool last night."

Dan pinched his chin and said to himself in the mirror—

"*Last* night you showed sense—you were sleeping like the dead, when you didn't holler for water."

And he added with an understanding grin:

"It is just thirty hours since I rolled you into your downy couch, old son! It has done you good—so have the rest of us."

"Thirty—? Suf-fer-ing Solomon! But I was trying to apologize—I do feel sick of myself now. I was so tired and sore. I didn't know anything! I——"

"Lay off it! And don't do it again! We are going to fall out and in again about six times a day. I flare up myself in a second, and it's over in a minute. I don't get really mad but once a year and never do get over that— And listen here! Don't think you have to be so careful not to hurt my little feelings—I'll take a lot from a friend and nothing at all from an enemy. Get that. As to my precious sensibilities—I don't leave 'em around to get stepped on. Go soak your shape, if you want to eat with Dan."

After he had howled and splashed, gasped and rubbed to a glow, McLeod recalled Wheeler's earlier remark.

"What did you mean by, 'So have the rest of us?' " he asked as he dressed.

"Done you good," explained Dan. "I sent word to your uncle you were all right and would be up there today, and the rest of it is in the paper—on the table there."

Partly dressed, McLeod read the heading in a morning paper—

**INNOCENT OF CRIME**
**HE SERVES SENTENCE**

And underneath he read the prison interview and confession of the man who had been paid to plant the money in his, McLeod's, pocket, then to lie about it on the stand. He also confessed to having been one of a gang who were preparing to loot the bank, and was proud of his skill as "inside man."

This meant much to McLeod, for his record was now cleared, and he breathed more freely as he read. The last sentence of the paragraph, however, took his breath away again—

It is said that young McLeod is in line to inherit great wealth.

"What does that mean—'great wealth?' "

He looked up at Wheeler blankly.

"What else would your uncle do with his money?" Dan retorted.

"D-D-Didn't know he had any—worth mention," said Mac.

"They don't live in that section on a shoestring," Dan reminded him.

"Anyhow—I hope he outlives me," Mac said cheerfully as he struggled with a collar.

Wheeler evidently was fully informed.

"No chance. He's got angina pectoris—the doctors don't give him three months," said Wheeler. "And this Spark Gang business will finish him in a week—for money!"

McLeod did not know how to take this cool statement, but concluded that he would wait for fuller information before he got excited about the matter.

"Did you get that story put on the front page?" he asked next.

"I told a reporter I knew where he could dig it up," Wheeler said carelessly. "There's a better story than that in the papers this morning. The 'Mysterious Israfil' was robbed of his diamonds last night—another Spark Gang job, they say—at least, there was the usual explosion and fire, and the gems walked off in the confusion. But get into your new clothes—you can read that at the table."

"I don't see where I come in on this detective business," McLeod said as he excitedly tried to hurry and dived under the dresser for a cuff-button; "for I suppose it is settled now that we are on the job. What did Huen Ling mean, by the way, when he said at the end that it was your du——"

"*Hi* there!" Wheeler shouted loudly to drown Mac's words; then with a frown and gesture toward his lips for silence he stepped quickly to the hall-door.

There he waited until a soft step had passed and receded outside, then looked out to make sure nobody was within hearing before he returned to charge McLeod:

"Don't ever do that again! Nobody heard you that time, but that was just luck. You had better not mention what I am supposed to be up to, any time at all; *but* when it comes to talking about what you heard Huen Ling tell me—I thought you had more sense! And in a place like this! Why not hire a hall?"

The last was then current slang, and especially barbed sarcasm. Mac flushed painfully.

"I didn't think," he said weakly. "Besides, it didn't mean anything—what he said about your——"

He was maundering when Dan snapped him up.

"There you go again! Have I got to put you to sleep to stop it? Look at me—this may sound funny, but if I were you I shouldn't laugh at it. You are playing with sure death!"

Wheeler's voice took on a low, harsh rasp.

And to Mac it seemed as if a chill like the dank air of a vault passed over him—the bright Spring morning was gone—and as he met Wheeler's eyes he had for an instant the distempered fancy that he was gazing into the deep, cavernous eye-holes of a white skull; that in those musty eye-holes gleamed a cold green light, baleful, deadly.

"I'll remember."

He shivered as he spoke. And he added—

"You mean there are certain things I am not to speak of, even to you?"

"Correct. That is part of what I mean."

Wheeler did not explain any further, but from that time on it was enough for Dan to look at his companion with that same strange expression—Mac would instantly sheer off from the topic in hand and fall silent.

AS THEY finished dressing and went down to breakfast it was Wheeler who did all the talking. He told how he had walked the floor until after daylight on their return from Chinatown.

"This hand was giving me a good time."

He raised and worked his shapely right hand, now smoothly supple as before.

"The yegg in the red sweater had a jaw like a stone-crusher, and by the time I got you laid away between sheets it was the size of two, and jumping high and handsome—all the way to my ear. I soaked it in hot water, then walked the floor, and repeat.

"Your friend Piet came to ask for you—to say your uncle was waiting to see you as soon as you waked and had breakfast—and he told me about a Swedish masseur, Carlson. He has a sanatorium and gym on King Street near the Russian Consulate and not far from this Israfil's place. He is a queer half-dumb chap, but he knows his business."

Again McLeod knew from Dan's forbidding face that he was not to comment or to question, and he kept a sulky silence which seemed to make Wheeler more talkative. As they went down-stairs Dan went on of his own accord:

"You want to see this Israfil—sounds like a Bible name but it is not. He is a sort of a fad with some of the smart set just now. And he *has* got more tricks than the average faker. He lectures on hypnotism and jujutsu and does the stunts himself. We'll go see him— Know anything about hypnotism?"

"I studied it under James," Mac admitted modestly.

"And I know Jap wrestling; so we ought to be able to call his bluff between us," Wheeler said as they were sitting down to the same table he had chosen before. "He wants to meet you."

"So you have met him? What makes you think he is a bluff?" asked Mac.

"Who isn't? And he has got it written all over him. Not that I blame him—it's his game, and he wins money at it—but I'd like to know where he picked up that name of his. Here comes the waiter. Talk weather until he has gone."

Already McLeod had learned that talk from Dan meant that he was in good humor. When the waiter had gone he cannily probed for the cause thereof.

"What did you do yesterday afternoon and evening?" he asked.

Wheeler's lips twitched as he answered:

"Foxy! I don't mind. I put in an hour at a gymnasium, did some odd jobs, and in the evening I win a nice little bundle at Hawley's to pay running expenses. That's where I met this Israfil person—he's popular with the young sporting crowd—and we gave a little exhibition of Jap wrestling, he and I."

"At Hawley's?"

"No—we went down to Carlson's gym for that. Israfil is rather thick with the Swede. Where did he get that name?"

"It seems to worry you," Mac smiled. "Israfil was the angel of—something or other. Sure it isn't in the Bible?"

"Angel of hypnotism perhaps. No—it is not in the Bible. What do they teach you in college?" Wheeler asked sharply.

"Bible, for one thing. But I didn't take 'Semitic 11'—I intended to, but I had to leave when my father died."

"Going to see your uncle right after breakfast?"

Wheeler hastily changed the subject.

"I sent word you'd be around not later than ten. You may see the girl there."

Wheeler colored, and coughed to cover it.

"You'll come with me?" Mac asked. "Come ahead! I'd like you two to meet, and you'd like Miss Mason—I know."

It was Mac's turn to color as he spoke of the girl.

"I know it too—too well."

Dan met McLeod's eyes squarely.

"What's the matter with us?" Dan went on. "Can't we say her name without looking foolish? She certainly has come-hither eyes on her, but there are others."

His own eyes narrowed to a slit.

"Then you will come?" Mac asked. "Fine! It is after nine now—we'd better take a cab."

Mac almost believed he was as delighted as he seemed to be, but Wheeler's lips curled slowly as he said:

"Tickled to death—yeh? Well, don't worry—I am not coming. I'd look sweet butting into a family reunion without a bid, wouldn't I? If I ever do come to call, be sure to tell 'em to lock up the silver *and* the girl!"

As Mac stared, stunned by the fierce anger that flamed in Wheeler's eyes so abruptly, he felt the strange numbness creeping over him again. Moreover, he couldn't help feeling half-guilty because Dan had surprized his secret uneasiness at the thought of Wheeler meeting Mary Mason. He sat speechless, fascinated.

Slowly Wheeler set down his unfinished coffee, and slowly he rose from the table. All the time he held McLeod's eyes with the cold glitter of his own, while his face turned marble-hard and contemptuous.

Throwing down his napkin by his plate with his left hand, his swift right hand slipped a folded bank-note under McLeod's butter-plate as he leaned forward in rising. It was one of his sleight-of-hand tricks, done so cleverly that no one but Mac could see it. And at the same time he coldly murmured—

"You'll need some cash in your pocket."

"Yes. It is very nice," Mac said deliberately and bitterly, "to take money, and a slap in the face at the same time. And from a man who *says* he is your friend."

"Cheer up!" Wheeler responded crisply. "It will be the last time."

Mac sat still until he saw his room-mate disappear around a corner, and then took up the bank-note, unfolding it in plain sight of the waiter, who was now standing near and trying to look unconscious. It was a hundred, of course. No doubt it was a part of Dan's last night's winnings at roulette.

He asked the waiter for the check, holding the bill in his hand.

"Beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Wheeler said it was to go on the room account," the waiter whispered respectfully, "and he signed the check when he ordered."

Mac's grim face gradually broke into an unwilling, baffled smile as he shook his head, and the waiter ventured on a comment:

"That's right. He's a swift one—you can't tie him! Shall I get that changed for you at the desk, sir?"

"Thanks—I wish you would. Nine tens and ten ones," said Mac.

And as that meant a dollar tip the waiter beamed upon him and was tenderly solicitous thenceforward.

McLeod sat pondering. What had happened? Did this mean a breach between him and Wheeler—"the last time?" Or did Wheeler mean it would be the last time it would be necessary to furnish him with money? Could he come back to their room after this?

He could do nothing else. Everything he wore on his person had been bought with Wheeler's money, and he could not pay for his outfit. His old clothes had disappeared—no doubt the rag-man had them—so he could not leave his fine raiment in the room up-stairs, with a dignified note of farewell. It was strange how lonely he felt already.

When the waiter returned with the money he hurried to the room; but Wheeler had gone out, so he started out to visit his uncle, a cloud of depression and uncertainty hanging over him.

* * *

HE HAD a carriage called because there was not time to walk, and as he rolled smoothly up the Avenue he began to tingle with suspense. There was no blinking the fact that his future depended on the outcome of this visit.

He tried to recall how his uncle looked, but it had been six—eight—years ago, and he could not summon any picture of him. His father had seldom spoken of his own younger brother, but to the boy—to Stuart himself—Uncle Alan had always stood for mystery and adventure. He embodied all that was alluring and forbidden in the Great Outside World, and on his few short visits to the little Vermont village where Mac had lived the boy had been too dazzled and delighted to see him clearly.

Had the gossiping neighbors been right? Should he find his uncle a half-crazy crank—an adventurer or visionary inventor—whose wealth was all imaginary? Piet had spoken as if he were a personage, but that might be only because Alan McLeod was Mary Mason's guardian. Perhaps his uncle would turn out to be a sort of cheap imitation-aristocrat, living in some sort of small freak house just to get on the Avenue!

But the numbers were approaching the one he was looking for—and all the houses on this block were large and imposing. Mac read the numbers as he passed, his heart thumping as he saw the mansions growing more chill and forbidding— And it must be on this block— The carriage stopped.

"I'll walk back," he heard himself tell the driver, and the carriage rolled away.

Stuart McLeod crossed the sidewalk and slowly climbed the broad granite steps. There must be some mistake— No, the number was right— But the house was so broadly solid and ponderous, with its handsome plate-glass windows that seemed to stare past him with a clear, wide-eyed tolerance that was worse than scorn.

Once more he made sure of the number before gently pressing the bell. He was prepared to be told by a haughty liveried potentate that nobody had ever heard the name McLeod as he stood staring at the heavy iron-bound door, doubting whether one man could swing it.

The door opened smoothly, and in it stood a Chinese boy in a neat black uniform and round black cap. The boy bowed with grace and a flashing smile as he spoke before McLeod could open his mouth:

"Mr. McLeod? Your uncle expects you—you will please come in."

He found himself in a large and high room that fitted his conception of a baronial hall of old, with polished dark-oak floor and paneling, wide fireplace and suits of armor standing guard on their pedestals. It was complete, even to the weapons on the walls and the carved oak staircase.

As he was relieved of coat and hat he felt a homelike air of welcome in spite of the medieval grandeur of the room. The boy seemed actually glad to see him, and looked at him with a half possessive pride.

"He is in the library," he whispered: "I told him you were here—I was watching from the window."

And again he smiled.

No stiff formality—just an all-in-the-family confidence. Mac followed the brisk black figure, much encouraged but still tremulous within. A wide door opened before him, and he was left to enter alone.

He was in a spacious room walled with books, light and warm with the sun coming through wide east windows. A huge table of heavy, polished oak was strewn with books and magazines; and at its end, before the fire, his uncle reclined in an easy-chair. He was thin, and his mobile features, finely cut on a large mold, meant strong emotional force. They framed large hazel eyes like Mac's own, and in those eyes still burned the fire of virile power as they steadily watched the younger man's face.

Mac circled the large table with unconscious grace, eagerly reaching out for the thin hand of the invalid, on his clear young face a genuine admiration and deference.

"Stuart McLeod——"

The deep tone startled Mac and set something vibrating within him as his uncle went on—

"It seems a long time I have been waiting for you to come, but—you are well worth the waiting."

He held Mac's hand with a grip surprizingly strong, and looked up at him intently.

"Yes, you are a McLeod—a handsome ——; and I suppose you know it."

"I d-d-don't know—the f-f-folks up home used to say I looked just like my uncle."

Mac flushed richly.

"Stammer and all!"

His uncle smiled.

"And I used to be able to blush like that. You are almost too good to be true."

Pulling him to the chair near by:

"Sit down, Stuart—that is your chair. Pardon me for not rising, but the doctors say I have only a few heart-beats coming to me, and I am saving them."

"You don't look sick—or old. I hope they are wrong."

Mac found his throat full.

"No—they are right," rejoined his uncle. "It doesn't matter. But I have saved all my strength today to talk with you. I am allowed only a few minutes, so we'll not waste breath on pretty speeches. I want to tell you some important facts. I can only make a beginning in the allotted time. Let's get down to bed-rock at once."

"Yes, sir."

"As for the past—" starting with deliberate precision—"I shall only say that I should have found you before if I had known that you were left without means. I supposed that you had a living income, especially when I heard you had been in London. I know now that you worked your passage across. I heard nothing of your false imprisonment until I arrived in New York last week, but a letter to this address would have reached me and I could have had you out in a fortnight, through my lawyers. Why didn't you let me know?"

"I d-didn't know this address," Mac stammered, "or think you—c-c-cared."

"And you my only living kin!" said his uncle slowly.

Then with a long sigh:

"Well—that is youth! At my age, my boy, you will know that we oldsters live only in and for our young. And you are all the son I have.

"But I did not intend to be drawn back to this. What I want you to know first of all is that I made a will some time ago, dividing my property about equally between you and my ward, Mary Mason. Moreover, I do not want you to wait for a dead man's shoes before you can live comfortably, so I have placed a small amount in the Hayes National Bank in your name. In case of my sudden death, which may occur at any moment, Judge Martin will fully inform you.

"One other thing you are to remember; and that is, that in case you are ever in a tight place financially—at any time after I am gone—go to Huen Ling for advice and *take* his advice. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Mac's whisper was husky.

"Now I want to know if there is any reason why you can not live here contentedly for the few days or weeks I have to live. Miss Mason is staying at the Van Sanvoords' by my request, and I like to have some young life in the house—although I might not be able to see you more than an hour a day. It will please me much to have you here—if you can come?"

"You d-d-don't need to ask me—I should be delighted," said Mac. "There is only one thing that might stand in the way. I am not sure——"

"Don't tell me you are married—or in love?" his uncle interrupted, sitting up suddenly.

"No!" Mac shouted. "But I promised—P-Perhaps I'd better tell you how it is, if it will not tire you too much."

"It rests me to listen to you—and it's about all I am living for now. Tell it all."

And his uncle leaned back relaxed.

Stuart told of his meeting with Wheeler and the agreement between them, of all that had happened since and of the quarrel at the breakfast-table. He finished with some embarrassment:

"So I d-d-don't know what he meant—or just how we stand now—but he has done a lot for me. I don't want to go back on him if I can help him in any way—although I don't know what help I could give him, or just what he intends to do. He is a strange man—you can't help feeling afraid of him; but I never got so—so attached to anybody in a short time. I have tried——"

"I can understand," his uncle interrupted.

"I think I know more about young Wheeler than you do. He is dangerous as an enemy. As a friend— Are you sure he is a friend?"

"He told Matty the Mick so. And I promised."

Mac's lips drew straight.

"I see the man has fascinated you," resumed his uncle, "and it is natural; but do not let your fascination blind you to your best interest—or to actual facts. Doesn't it look as if he knew who you were at the start and played the Good Samaritan as an investment? Won't a cash return satisfy him? You can write him a check now, you know, and be free of all complications—out of danger."

"I c-can't go back on my word," Mac said wretchedly, but without wavering.

The older man did not speak at once, and when he did his voice had a new tremor in its low tones.

"Then you would disappoint me—leave me for this young swashbuckler?" adding more firmly, "Think it over well before you make a final decision."

As the two kinsmen faced each other the resemblance was striking—in each handsome face the dour Scottish grimness stood out plainly.

"I gave my word—I can't break it—I am sorry," said Mac. "And it's not because of your money I am sorry, either."

With an effort he turned away his face, stood up and asked—

"D-Do you mean that I am to go—that you don't want me to come here?"

"No—no! My boy!"

His uncle flashed into a sudden smile that was almost boyish.

"Sit down again. I was trying you out, that's all. I used a bit of stage-craft—I once graced the stage for a season—to do it, and it has tired me out. We shall not quarrel over Dan Wheeler. We may need him, both of us, to help us out of our trouble. We won't go into that today, for I have come to the end of my strength—almost. Now I expect Mary Mason will be here in a moment, and I have something to say before she comes."

He was speaking rapidly and with the minimum effort. Stuart listened in a daze of stunned surprize.

"I don't care to have Wheeler meet Mary, and I want to warn you not to fall in love with her, for she ought to make a brilliant marriage. I think I have found the man for her. Within a few days I expect a young English nobleman——"

"MISS MARY, sir!" announced the soft-footed Chinese boy at the door.

"Let her in, Chan, and don't tell her who is here," said his master.

"As if she couldn't see the hat and coat in the hall!" said a low, rich voice that went through Mac like a half-forgotten harmony; and Mary Mason was in the room.

Mac could not remember afterward what the first words were between them. He was all eyes and ears, but he was dizzy with excitement and the hammering of his heart.

He came back to conscious life when his uncle said he must be taken to his room across the large hall, and was about to tell Chan to call the man who carried him.

"Let me!"

Mac stepped forward, suddenly moved by strong sympathy for the helpless man. "You open the doors, Chan."

"But, my boy, I have to be carried like a baby. It takes a strong man— Ah-h! What a sensation—it's like being lifted by the wind. You have the McLeod power and gentleness. 'By, Mary!"

When he was laid on his bed he told Chan not to send in the nurse until Stuart had gone, and when they were alone he motioned for him to bend low.

"Stop at the bank for your check-book on your way back, and do *not* break with Wheeler!" he whispered impressively. "I may have to leave you to protect Mary. He is dangerous to both men and women, but *don't offend him!* Come tomorrow at the same time—that's all!"

He closed his eyes and looked like a corpse as Mac hurried out to send in the waiting nurse. Mac was alarmed and felt somewhat relieved when he met the doctor in the hall, about to make his daily visit.

A few questions, which the doctor answered positively, reassured Mac so that he returned to the library with his mind almost at ease. The first minute in the presence of Mary Mason did the rest, for he was a young and healthy man.

Stuart McLeod had fallen in love with Mary Mason at sight. They talked in his uncle's library—walked in the park; and after he left her he moved in a golden haze that was a part of her.

TO BE CONTINUED.

# THE POWER OF THE EAGLE

## *AN ARTICLE*

BY

### *Alanson Skinner*

MY FRIEND Scalp-Lock the Crow took down my buffalo-hide shield from the place of honor where it hung and held it at arm's length to the zenith, the nadir and the four points of the compass, praying under his breath as he did so. Then he hung it back in its place and began to chant a song to it. An ancient song that carried with it the savor of sage-grass on the prairies after a warm Summer shower, the smell of Indian tobacco and wood fires, so that I could not but feel myself transported to the banks of the Little Bighorn, with the teepees of the Crow about me in a far-flung circle. The song had power—I could feel myself slipping, slipping from reality to a misty vision of times departed. And then——

"*Waugh! Eeah! Woof!*" The Scalp-Lock was on his feet, stamping and swaying like a grizzly bear on its haunches, bellowing like a wounded monster, tearing at the floor like a bear in spasms, and then clasping his sides and roaring. It was a transition as startling as sudden, but so swift and dramatic that I knew before he told me what it was all about!

"An ancient song, my brother," laughed Scalp-Lock in perfect English as he sat down on the floor beside me. "It was my grandfather's shield song. A grizzly bear appeared to him in a vision and told him how to make it and use it, so that he should never be harmed in battle; yet once he was shot with a Sioux arrow, and he acted like a wounded bear and tore up the earth, and when he had plastered it on the wound, behold, it was well! Thereafter he always went through the whole performance when the enemy was sighted and was never hurt again. But why do I tell you this anyway? I could see you sitting there smelling the sage-brush—that was the incense that he was told in his dream to purify his shield with—looking at the Bighorn Mountains, and watching the bear approach! And you call yourself a white man! I don't believe it!"

"But it is so—remember that I have seen something of the Indian people and love them, and I know bears a little," I answered. "Besides, you are only partly right. I did not see the bear coming; you woke me from my trance when you bellowed and roared. I was looking at the Bighorns and smelling sage-brush, though, sure enough."

"Well," said Scalp-Lock grudgingly, "it may be so, but if you are really a white man, then you are the only one I know who can think Indian and fall under the sway of our ancient songs. But come, I have handled your sacred shield without permission, and I don't even know the rules and tabus that govern it. Among the Absaroka, the Crows, that would require a sacrifice of atonement. What must I do to pacify you and your medicine? To begin with, I herewith fill and offer you a pipe. Accept it, O my brother, and do not bear me ill-will for my rudeness."

"*Hau,*" I answered, taking the pipe and puffing slowly. "It does not matter. The shield was a gift from an Indian I once befriended. I do not know its rules or even its history. I wish I did. My Menomini relatives by adoption are woodland Indians; they say that 'their heads are their shields,' and they do not use these buffalo-hide affairs. But since it is a sacred object, nevertheless, I must demand something, but I will make it easy. Tell me, how does it happen that you are named Nuwida, the Scalp-Lock? That is, if it is not against your medicine to speak of it. Did you gain the name in battle?"

"My brother," ejaculated Scalp-Lock, "you *are* an Indian! You have me in a place where I can not refuse to tell you, although, in common with many Indian peoples, we Crows do not like to talk about either our names or the dead! But I am caught fairly. In this way it happened:

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*"The Power of the Eagle," copyright, 1924, by Alanson Skinner.*

I WAS called Scalp-Lock (he began) after my great-uncle Nuwida, who was a great man and a warrior among the Crows. When he was a lad he dreamed that he was befriended by a bald eagle. He went out into our mountains—I am a Mountain Crow, not a River Crow, you understand—and fasted and mourned, hoping for a vision. He gazed out on the pure cloudless sky, and on the snow-clad peaks above, and the green plains spread below him dotted with swarms of buffalo. His heart was sad, and he prayed to the Great Powers to have pity on him. He even cut off the first joint of the little finger on his left hand and offered it to the Sun, hoping that this sacrifice might be accepted, and his suffering be regarded by the Great Powers as proof of his sincerity. And it fell about that way, for a bald eagle dropped out of the sky before him, and lighted on the grass in front of him, and spoke to him:

"O my grandson, I have seen you and pitied you. From now on you shall be under my protection. You shall rise to great and lofty heights among your people, just as an eagle ascends in the heavens. Your reputation shall be as pure as the sky in which I dwell. When in battle you shall strike the enemy with the fury of a swooping eagle! You shall always be successful, so long as you remember me and sacrifice to me from time to time.

"You shall fringe your buffalo-hide shield with eagle feathers. But, remember, if ever you neglect to honor me or fail to call on me in time of trouble, that day your career will end. All warriors desire to die in battle. Obey and honor me, and that is the way that you shall finish. You do not have to grow old and ill-favored and a burden on your children. When the time comes, I shall take you up with me into the heavens. I have spoken."

Then the eagle ran forward a little awkwardly, spread its wings, hopped up off the ground and in a few strong beats had risen, cleaving the air in ever widening circles, until it had mounted far into the sky and was a speck above him. My great-uncle prayed long and earnestly and at length went home, satisfied that he would be a man among men from now on.

True enough, it fell about as the eagle had prophesied. The Scalp-Lock became a warrior and a chief. He counted the first coup on the enemy innumerable times. He stole picketed horses right in the midst of enemy camps. He took guns from armed warriors in battle with his hands alone, and freed them to go back and tell their people who it was who had done the deed. The Shoshones, Arapahoes, Gros Ventres, Mandans, Sioux, Cheyennes, Flatheads and many others knew the name of Scalp-Lock. The Blackfeet felt their blood turn to water when it was said that he was in the neighborhood.

My great-uncle took his name from the fact that his hair was very long, and he kept it in a braid that was as thick as my arm, and seven feet in length*. He had several wives, and it was the special duty of his youngest and favorite woman to comb and oil his hair and dress it for ceremonial occasions. She wound it up with a deerskin strap and then folded it into a club a foot long that he had to bear in spite of its weight, on all ordinary occasions; but, when he was clad in his best, it was oiled and combed and allowed to drag on the ground.

ON ONE warm day in early Summer a war-party started out against the Sioux, with my uncle as leader. They expected to surprize the enemy and capture many horses. There were twenty-six in the party, all told. They traveled slowly south and eastward for many days and finally arrived at the Black Hills, where they discovered a large camp of the Sioux in a small valley. The scouts reported many horses, so the Crows slipped up to the camp after nightfall and tried to stampede the herd. But somehow the Sioux were too many for them, and too much on their guard. Our men were unable to capture a single horse and had to flee, as they had come, on foot.

They retreated up the valley until they

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*In corroboration of Nuwida's statement about his great-uncle's hair, *vide* Catlin, in his "North American Indians," Vol. 1, letter 8, p. 49:

"I observed the other day that most of them (the Crows) were over six feet high, and very many of these have cultivated their hair to such an almost incredible length, that it sweeps the ground as they walk; there are frequent instances of this kind amongst them, and in some cases a foot or more of it will drag on the grass as they walk, giving exceeding grace and beauty to their movements. . . . The present chief of the Crows, who is called 'Long-Hair' (Could this have been Nuwida's great-uncle himself?), and has received his name as well as his office from the circumstance of having the longest hair of any man in the nation, I have not yet seen: but I hope I yet may, ere I leave this part of the country. This extraordinary man is known to several gentlemen with whom I am acquainted, and particularly to Messrs. Sublette and Campbell, of whom I have before spoken, who told me they had lived in his hospitable lodge for months together; and assured me that they had measured his hair by a correct means, and found it to be ten feet and seven inches in length; closely inspecting every part of it at the same time, satisfying themselves that it was the natural growth."

came to a place where there was a steep bluff and many rocks, and here they decided to make a stand behind a breastwork of boulders, for they knew that the Sioux would pursue them at daybreak, and they had no chance of escaping on foot. It seemed to them that they had better stand like men, and give the Sioux a stomachful of fighting.

It did not take the Crows long to heap up rocks and make their defenses, and they had barely completed them before the day dawned, and with the first rays of the sun there came a swarm of bonneted Sioux galloping up the cañon on their trail.

The Crows held their fire until the Sioux were almost under their noses, and then they sent a shower of flint-tipped arrows among them. Horses and riders, proud in their gorgeous trappings, went down in heaps; and the twang of bowstrings was answered with the shrill war cries of the Dakotas. The Sioux are men, and they know how to fight. The Blackfeet might have retreated after such a loss at the very beginning, but the Dakota did not give an inch.

Again and again they charged the Crow breastworks, some of them even getting over them and dying by the knife, but our warriors were not to be overwhelmed so easily. So by the time the sun was noon high the Sioux had given up trying to storm our fort and had drawn off a little way to counsel and to wait. Meanwhile more and more Sioux warriors galloped into the valley, and the war-bonnets of the Cheyenne and the Arapaho were seen. There must have been thousands of the enemy in the Black Hills, and only twenty-six of our people—many of them wounded.

Evidently the Sioux and their allies thought it was not good to charge the Crow stronghold again. They just camped there and waited. The weather was warm, and most of our men were wounded. They had no water and scarcely any food, so that all the Dakota had to do was to wait and watch, like the buzzards that began to appear in the sky above them. Every few hours some of the young men of the Sioux would attack and fall back wounded. Others, who had rifles, crawled through the grass and the rocks and picked off the Crows who showed themselves. Some of our young men grew desperate and resolved to throw themselves away. They painted their faces and dashed out of the shelter armed with their knives and war-clubs, praying only to strike a coup or blow against the enemy before they were riddled with arrows. At night a few escaped and managed to get away with Sioux horses, but none ever won all the way back to our people.

AT LENGTH the sun rose on the Crows and their enemies who surrounded them for the fourth time. Inside the rock fortress all were dead or dying except my great-uncle, the Scalp-Lock. As the sun rose he sprang on the breastwork, armed only with his knife, and sang his death song, while the Sioux gathered below him to gaze in wonder and in admiration. The Scalp-Lock had loosened and combed his hair, which blew in the morning breeze, and he had put on his best war-clothes with their porcupine-quilled ornaments.

"O Dakotas! O people of the great Sioux nation!" he chanted. "You call yourselves men; why do you stand there idle? I know what you are after. It is this scalp-lock of mine! It is good. I give it to you! All you have to do is to come and get it, O Dakotas! Come, if you are men; I am waiting for you!"

As my uncle stood there singing his defiance, a mighty roar went up from the Sioux warriors. As one man they urged their horses forward and charged the lone Crow warrior who stood there, defiant, singing his war-song—the great war-song of our people:

"Earth and Sky are everlasting—
  Men must die.
Old age is a thing of evil—
  Charge and die!"

The sea of war-bonnets surged forward. A thousand war-cries drowned out the Crow death song. The drumming of four thousand unshod hoofs roared up the cañon. They burst over the barricade like a Spring freshet.

"Hey," shouted one Dakota to another in the dust that swirled around them, "did you strike him, brother?"

"Not I—I didn't even see him—*hau*, you over there on the spotted pony! Have you seen the Crow?"

And so it went. No Dakota could claim

the honor of counting any coup upon my uncle. Twenty-five dead Crows they could account for, mostly there behind their battlement, and a few that had won their way through the Sioux encampment and died at a distance. But Nuwida, the Scalp-Lock, was not there. He seemed to have vanished, and we can testify that he never came home to the Crow nation.

YEARS afterward, when we had made peace with the Sioux, a party of our nation was visiting at Pine Ridge agency. Old times were the topic of the discussion one evening, and the Sioux remembered well the Crow war-party that attacked them and was wiped out to a man. They asked us whether the chief who had called himself "Scalp-Lock" had ever come home to his lodge. Our people said that he had not, and a silence fell on the Dakotas gathered there. Finally one old medicine man asked—

"What was the nature of this Scalp-Lock's medicine?"

Bell Rock, a Crow warrior of distinction, answered him—

"An eagle!"

The old Dakota sat smoking for a long time silently; then he spoke:

"I was one of those Sioux who charged the breastwork at that battle. I saw Scalp-Lock until I was within a few feet of him, and I raised my feathered lance thinking I should surely count the first war-honor on a brave man. But—just as I reached him, behold, he was not there! I felt a breath of air, a gust as if from an eagle wing, fan my face, and he vanished! When the dust had settled, and we were looking for the body of the warrior, I remember hearing the call of an eagle, high above us, above the circling vultures and ravens. It is in my heart that the eagle took him up!"

"AND that is what we Crows believe today, my brother," the Indian concluded. "Come now, what do you, who have an Indian's heart, think of this mystery?"

# THE CHILD'S HONOR

## A Complete Novelette

## by H C Bailey

*Author of "Blood Royal," "The Lord of St. Lo," etc.*

THIBAUT was eating the last of a goose pie. He licked his fingers and groaned. For Silvain, his master, was singing a ballad with a burden of "Your life is today, but mine is tomorrow."

They were riding the road on the bank above the Loire. The wide-winding river flowed full and gave back mellow Autumn light to the silver of murmuring willows and Silvain's bright armor and the shield with the golden star on Thibaut's back.

Thibaut looked at his fingers, where no scrap of pastry or gravy was left.

"What was is better than what is, but a poor soul must try everything, as the widow said when she went to church again."

Silvain tossed back his hair and looked far.

"By my faith, I see the towers of St. Martin!" he cried.

"No saint for you, my lord. For he gave only half his cloak to the beggar. But you would give all and go bare, breas and back."

"Body of me, you are a hasty man, brother," Silvain smiled. "What would you have? I came out of Flanders yesterday with nothing but myself and my name; and here I ride armed with golden crowns in my scrip. I gain upon the world as fast as I live. Be at peace; I shall never let fortune go. I am no saint to die poor."

An old woman driving a donkey came toward them where the road narrowed by a fall in the bank, and the donkey, laden with a pannier of walnuts on either side, needed much room. Silvain drew aside and stopped and beckoned her on, calling, "God bless you, mother, the road is yours," for she was flustered at hindering a knight and hauled on her donkey's head and could not stop the beast and so was borne on in shrill distress.

While he waited another horseman clattered past him and jostled the donkey on the woman and upset her in a shower of walnuts and, cursing her, rode on, but not far. For Silvain came at speed and crashed into him from behind, shoulder to quarter, and the horse went into the willows and the rider to the ground.

Silvain was standing over him before he had stopped rolling.

"Sir, you lack courtesy," he said sadly. "That has brought you down."

The man raised himself on one hand, breathing heavily, and brushed the dust from a hard, eager face and looked about him and tried to rise.

"No," said Silvain. "You are in your right place there. You have hurt a woman."

And he put his hand to his sword.

"What foul trick is this?" the man cried. "Who is your master?"

"Sir, I serve God in my humble wise. And would have you do so. I pray you ask pardon of her for the ill you have done her—" he pointed to the old woman groveling after her walnuts—"good faith, she might be the mother of us both."

"The grandma with the ass?" the man laughed. "Your mother, friend, not mine," and again he tried to rise.

"Lie there yet," Silvain said, showing his sword.

Up the bank from the river came a naked boy. His white body glistened wet and was quivering with haste. He stood a moment watching them; the rippling muscles sank to rest and rose again.

"Sir, sir, stand off from him or you shall rue it," he cried and marched on Silvain.

"Why, who are you that come so gallant and gay?" Silvain laughed.

"No matter for that. I am this lord's man."

The boy came face to face with him.

"Stand off, I say."

"God's faith, he must be better than he seems who has such a champion," Silvain said gravely, and he drew back. "Up, sir, and do the woman right."

The man sprang up and started at them both and gave an angry, puzzled laugh. Then he caught his horse and flung the old woman some silver and sprang to the saddle and galloped away.

"Such is he," said Silvain. "But what are you, my lord?"

He smiled at the boy, who indeed was good to see and bore himself nobly.

"I think I have seen you in a sculpture of the blessed dead going up into heaven."

"I thank you, I am neither dead nor a lord," the boy laughed, "but the Sieur de Ligny's page."

"And that is the Sieur de Ligny?"

"God forbid," the boy said.

"Amen. For I would have no friend of mine serve him."

"Sir, I thank you that you call me friend. You are a gentle knight."

The boy turned and ran back to the river and dived and swam away to the farther shore.

The old woman had gathered her walnuts and her silver and was hurrying away from the place where such wild adventures came. Thibaut brought up the horses.

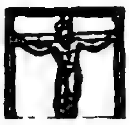
"God save you, how you make friends!" says he. "Here is an old wife gone grumbling that ever she saw your face, and a rich lord cursing you that you were born."

He worked his eyebrows.

"You take too much trouble, as the cock said when the hen ate her egg."

Silvain laughed.

"But the boy was pleased with me, brother," he said.



THAT night they came over the long bridge into Tours, and before he ate Silvain made haste to the abbey of St. Martin. In the tomb hewn out of the rock beneath the high altar where the body of the saint lay within the silver bars he prayed for noble ventures and happy fortune.

So with good heart he went in the morning to seek King Charles. The sister who was his guardian, Dame Anne de Beaujeu, had brought the boy to hold his court in the archbishop's palace. Silvain's high bearing, or Silvain's doublet of blue silk embroidered with much gold, won him the entry, unknown as he was. What surprized him was that he found few others waiting audience.

He turned back from the hall where among the lounging ushers half a dozen somber men like lawyers or merchants were close in talk and found in the courtyard a dozen more of the same meek solemnity. He joined them where they walked to and fro. Silvain always sought friends. While he greeted them they looked queerly at his blue and gold. They waited for him to make talk.

"Good faith, we be the smallest court that ever I saw," he smiled. "I thought to find all the lords of France here."

"Then you come late."

"Why, sir, is the king gone?"

"No. The lords," says one grimly; but another laughed. "Have patience. The lords go and the king remains."

"Sir, you talk darkly."

"If it is the lords you seek, seek the Duke of Orléans."

"I thank you. I would have the king for my lord," Silvain said quickly and thought quickly too.

For Louis of Orléans was the boy king's cousin and should stand at his right hand. If he had broken with King Charles and Madame Anne and the great lords chose to follow him, there would be trouble in France.

"I pray you give me counsel," Silvain said. "Is my lord of Orléans not by the king's side?"

They looked at him curiously; they could be seen wondering whether he was as candid as his blue eyes; but they had not to answer.

Oxen dragged a groaning wagon into the courtyard, and they must watch, for it bore a great cage in which lay a leopard. The wagoners slid the cage to the ground and turned their oxen and made off. The leopard whined and arched his back and thrust out his paws and scratched at the stones.

"——'s faith, he is comely," Silvain said. "I would like well to set him free."

"So would not I," said one. "Comely? Why, the —— made his beauty." And another:

"This is for the king to bait. He loves all fierce things."

Out from the palace a boy came running. He was small enough to be not yet in his teens, but his face was pale and old. Some vigor he had, for he ran furiously; but he was so ill made, breast and back jutting out over puny legs, his head by far too big for him, that he seemed even smaller than he was, feeble and sickly.

The grave men about Sylvain bared their heads to the king.

To the leopard's cage he came and put his hand in to stroke the beast. This it bore quietly, but edged away, looking up at him with wide eyes and kneading the ground. His boy Majesty was not satisfied; he drew the bolts of the door and opened it.

"He does not know fear," one of the men muttered, and they rustled together.

"He will when his sister hears of this," another said.

The little king stood in the doorway reaching his hand to the leopard, which drew back into a corner and rubbed itself against the bars. He called to it petulantly and laughed at it, and the leopard spat and crouched and sprang. The king went down with its body upon him, its claws on his shoulders, and he screamed as he fell.

Silvain sprang to. His left hand was at the leopard's throat; he bore back the fangs and the snarling head; his dagger struck at the heart. Tearing the boy's doublet from his lean shoulders, the leopard fell back and lay writhing and clawing at the air.

Silvain set the little king on his legs again and, holding an arm about him, said gently—

"Here is no hurt, my lord."

The king was shaking; the king was crying—

"Oh, oh, he is dead!"

He stamped his foot.

"You killed him, you."

Silvain looked at the still, lithe body.

"It is true. He has his deliverance," he said. "Do not grieve for him, my lord."

"Wretch! I hate you. He was my leopard," the king sobbed.

A man ran up with his hand on his sword.

"Stand from the king, sirrah," he cried.

Silvain knew the hard face of the knight of the donkey and the walnuts.

"Trémoille!"

The king ran to him.

"He has killed my leopard, my leopard that cousin Louis promised me."

"I saw the deed, sir."

Trémoille measured Silvain with shrewd, cold eyes.

"He is a rogue. Tell your men to take him. Oh, he must hang for it. My leopard, that I——"

He broke off. He was aware of his sister. Madame Anne came sedately, a small woman in meek black and white.

"You have made me fear for you, my lord. I pray you, think of yourself."

Her voice was humble and plaintive. She looked at the king, and he flushed and looked down and shifted his feet. She kept her eyes steady upon him and made a little, quick gesture to the palace.

The king muttered, "It was my leopard, my leopard that cousin Louis promised me," and shambled off.

"God has watched over him this day," said Madame Anne. "But alas, others have not."

She turned to the Sieur de la Trémoille.

"How came this wild beast in the palace, sir?"

"The king has said, *madame*. It was a present to him from the Duke of Orléans. Doubtless they both hoped much of the beast."

"But not this," said Madame Anne smoothly. "Who is he that killed it?"

Silvain stood forward.

"I had the fortune, *madame*."

"You come from Monseigneur d'Orleans?"

"Not I, who never saw him nor his. I am a knight out of Normandy, Silvain de St. Lo, to serve the king, and I bear a letter to you, *madame*, from the Bishop of Avranches."

He bent his knee and gave it her.

She looked at him over the seal.

"Silvain de St. Lo," she repeated. "You are young, sir."

"I have the more life to serve you, *madame.*"

She read the letter while Trémoille studied him keenly.

"My good lord of Avranches commends you to the king's grace," she said, lifting her grave, pale eyes to Silvain. "I doubt not it shall serve you."

"I ask only to serve the king, *madame.*"

"It is in my mind that there is forfeiture and outlawry against the blood of St. Lo."

"My father's wrong is dead in my father's grave. I claim nothing but to serve."

"You are wise in your youth. But in his age your father gave no true service to the king, my father."

"God is the judge between them this day, *madame.* I have no fear."

Trémoille laughed.

"That is true, at least. He has no fear."

Silvain made him a bow.

But Madame Anne took no heed. Her white, lifeless face looked up at Silvain.

"The king will consider of your plea," she said and turned away to the palace. "Come, Trémoille."

Silvain bowed low as she went out; he was erect again to see M. de la Trémoille look back at him. That did not trouble him.

"You have no fortune, sir," said one of the grave men. "She is her father's daughter, *la Grande Madame.*"

"Sir, let us not blame her for that. I have none to blame this day, for I have had great good fortune beyond my merit."

And then he went away and prayed at the cave of St. Gatien and afterward in the abbey of Marmoutier knelt before the flask of holy oil which the angel gave to St. Martin to anoint his bruises.

So, happy, he came to dine at the inn in the market-place. But Messire Thibaut was not there.

Silvain had eaten; he was sitting in the shade of a green alley reading a written book of his mother's prayers, when Thibaut showed his dark face flushed and giggling.

"What news have you, my lord? For there is never a baby in Tours has none," he panted and stretched himself at Silvain's feet.

"Why, brother, this is a kind world to me," said Silvain mildly, "and lets me not lack fortune."

"Say you so!"

Thibaut sucked his teeth.

"And do we fight for this little king and his great sister?"

"I think they will not have it so. For they do not like me, brother."

Thibaut slapped his thigh.

"God save them, they are kind, as the cat said when the dogs drove her into the dairy. How long will this little king last, my lord?"

"Fie, brother; you talk treason."

"So does every poor soul in Tours. For they say that Madame Anne has quarreled with the Duke of Orléans and all the great lords and arrayed them against her baby king. They are gone to Amboise and gather their strength against *madame* and the boy. And this morning the duke sent a leopard in a cage to the king, which was as, some say, a challenge—to show *madame* her little king as that leopard was; but others swear that he designed the leopard should kill the boy, who is——"

"That I will not believe, brother," Silvain said quickly. "I take no pleasure to believe that a man is base."

Thibaut grinned.

"But under which banner do we fight, my lord?"

"No banner is raised yet," Silvain said. "Wait and watch."

Thibaut chuckled.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle? Because no man hath hired me. And would not *madame* hire you, my lord?"

"Have patience, brother," Silvain said. "I see fortune."

A DAY and another day they waited in Tours; but no word came to Silvain from the king. Then he said:

"Here is little courtesy. I think they have not learned to love me," and he took horse.

This much pleased Messire Thibaut, who as they rode out to Tours wagged his long head and said:

"Wo to thee, O land, when the king is a child. That is Scripture."

"You are like a raven, brother. When you are happy, you croak," said Silvain gently.

"I think you have no ear, as the donkey said to the nightingale. This was music of joy, my lord. For you have taken the winning side, which you never did yet."

Silvain stared at him.

"Good faith, you are hard to please. We have ridden on many a venture and lost none."

"And gained nothing that a man can not carry on his back."

Silvain laughed.

"Do not fear. I am hungry too. I must have lands and lordship for my name. For that I was made. Do not fear. I have no mercy on this world."

But they had not found the short road to fortune; for when they came to Amboise, the Duke of Orléans was not there nor any other lord. Then they had better news that he was gathering a great array at Châteaudun and, making off thither, came to grass-land on which there were foot-races and horse-races and a merry company of men; and over all was a banner blazoned with a red porcupine.

Then Messire Thibaut goggled his eyes.

"Here be peaceful folk," he groaned. "By my grandam, this is paltry, as the boy said when the girls stayed kissing each other. Alas, my lord, where is our venture now? We have come from a child to a child."

For the porcupine was the badge of the Duke of Orléans.

But Silvain looked and smiled, and already he was opening his breastplate.

"You are a man of war, brother," he said. "Stay you with the armor. But I love a man who is gay. Here is good pastime."

He went across the meadows, a lithe, long fellow in his doublet and hose, pleasant to see. Where a foot-race was starting he lingered a moment; but the runners were lads, pages or squires at the oldest, and he passed on to the larger, lordlier company gathered about a stream. It wandered through the meadows some five to ten yards wide, and where it was narrowest they held a jumping-match.

A busy youth, slight and well shaped, with a round, laughing face, was marshaling them and challenging those that hung back with a flood of noisy mockery. By his noise, by his eagerness, by his little head, Silvain knew him for Louis, the Duke of Orléans.

When he had drawn up a long line and the older and the haughtier men had made good their claim to stand out he took his place at the head and led off, jumping well, clearing the water with something to spare and shouting his triumph. And Silvain came last, none heeding him. There were disasters, and the duke made merry at each splash.

Then all who had made the jump must jump back again after him where the stream was wider. So more of them had a wetting, and the duke enjoyed himself vastly and turned again for a jump still longer; and men began to take note of Silvain. For though many had fallen in and fallen out that long, unknown knight who came last was there still and jumping as far as the duke, a strange, shameful thing.

And now only he and the duke were left; and if they were to jump again they must clear some seven yards of water, and none knew if his Highness could do it; and the ritual of his Highness' sport was that he should win. This the long stranger seemed not to know, for he tossed back his fair hair and smiled and took his place for another jump and waited for the duke, who had his breath to find.

"Will you fling your heart over that, friend?" the duke called to him.

"I dare not turn back where you lead, my lord."

So the duke had to set himself to it and landed on the edge of the bank and fell into the water on his back. Then Silvain ran and, jumping over him through the spray that he made, cleared the stream and turned and hauled him out.

"By my faith, that was worth a wet skin to see."

The duke clapped him on the back.

"You are a man of my own make. And now I look at you, who the —— are you? You are none of mine."

"I pray you do not say so, my lord. For I have ridden far to follow you. I am Silvain de St. Lo, a knight of Normandy."

"No, faith, a knight of Orléans this day," the duke cried and linked arms with him. "There is man's blood in you. Come, we will go to horse and show these fellows who can not jump how to ride."

He peered up at Silvain's placid face and laughed and called to his muttering household on the farther bank—

"Follow who can; we will show you a lead."

His Highness made for a tent which was pitched with hangings of cloth of gold, and therein Silvain had the honor to hold out dry breeches for him as he changed and to drink a cup of Vouvray with him. This swift prosperity could be seen to displease the gentlemen of his Highness' court, who, when their master came out with his new favorite, stood together and made one another laugh.

His Highness was also merry.

"Saddle, saddle, you rogues," he said and shouted a hunting-call.

There were two horses by his tent—a huge gray charger which the groom had to gentle and a chestnut mare standing like a statue, a sleek, pretty creature.

"Take the lady, friend," says he and sprang on the gray. . .

Silvain was slower, looked at stirrups and girth and bit. The mare arched her neck and nuzzled into him. She let him mount and stood. The duke, who was making his charger twist and turn in all the devices of the lists, cried out:

"By my faith, you are no knight for a lady!"

Silvain touched her with his heel. She reared; she came down and tried to throw him over her head. She flung her head up and bolted.

Then there was a round of cheers and his Highness loudest. She swerved from the crowd and made for the stream. Her mouth was iron against the bit; he could not steady her; but on the very brink she drove in her hoofs and refused. Silvain set his heels at her ribs heartily. She turned and made for the tent. He wrenched her head round and held her at the merry crowd. It broke and scattered, and he drove her on and on till she was reeking and blown; then he took her over the brook where it was widest and turned her and made her jump again and so came back with her to where his Highness waited, still cheering him gaily.

"You are gracious, my lord," Silvain said. "I must ask your pardon. I fear I have spoiled your sport."

"Look how he puts me down again!" his Highness laughed to his gentlemen; but they smiled sourly. "You are a man in a thousand, my Silvain. Come ride with me. We will mark out a course for these gentle gallants to race."

And they were about it, his Highness zealously choosing jumps where there was good hope that horses would go down, when Silvain saw men in armor riding on the road.

"This is other work, I think," said Silvain. "Who comes here, my Lord?"

His Highness looked and groaned.

"It is the —— my cousin Dunois," he said.

A short square knight was making across the meadows.

"——'s body, Louis, why are you here?" he cried as he came.

It seemed to Silvain that the little, round face of his Highness had the look of a child who means to be naughty.

"Why, for sport, cousin. It has been a merry day, but you are not too late yet. You may ride in the hunting-race."

"I think we have another race to ride," said Count Dunois. "By St. Airt, you are not fair with me, Louis. You should have been at Châteaudun of Sunday and with all your power."

He looked round the meadow.

"What! Have you mustered no more than these?"

"There are none at Château-Renault," the duke said sulkily. "I have enough."

"And so you can make holiday! ——, Louis, you have chosen war, and you must throw all in or you are shamed."

"Fie, how you scold!" the duke cried. "Hark you, cousin, when we ride in arms, I shall not be behind Dunois. But we shall have no war. Once the boy is in my hands, Madame Anne is undone. And that will be soon. Alain D'Albret has a trick to bring him down."

"The —— take D'Albret and all his tricks!" Dunois cried. "I have no mind to your friends, my lord."

"Then make a new one," the duke laughed, and looked again like a naughty child. "Here is the best knight in France," and he reined back to Silvain's side.

"I have seen a thousand of them," says Dunois, staring at Silvain. "How did you come by this one, Louis?"

"He put me down, cousin. Which you have been trying to do all your days. You should love him."

Silvain bowed.

"If I may fight beside Dunois it is enough."

"Faith, you have chosen in a new kind this time, Louis," Dunois frowned. "And what brought you over to us, sir?"

"Sir, I ride for the honor of a good venture."

"And he had it, cousin. See, I put him

on Dragon, and he is there still," the duke laughed.

Dunois shrugged his shoulders.

"He is St. George, I suppose. Ride on, my lord, in ——'s name. I have enough to say to you."

But the duke was fractious, the duke was perverse. He would have his race; and when he had had his race he would ride with Silvain and talk to him of horse and hound, of tilting and sword-play and make much of him. And his gentlemen looked sour and Count Dunois sourest of all, and at this the duke was merry. So they came to Château-Renault.

SILVAIN was bidden live in the castle. He turned back to give Messire Thibaut news of him and found that lean man chaffering for a lodging with a saddler's wife. At the chestnut mare Thibaut made grimaces.

"What shall be done to the man whom the king delighted to honor? That is Scripture."

Thibaut put up an eyebrow.

"Indeed, he can not do without me, brother," Silvain smiled.

"And the other could not do with you. Boys will be boys, as the girl said when she married. But here is quick fortune! God help you, my lord, I fear for you. You begin to be lucky. How will you bear it?"

"I shall not fail, brother. I see far."

And indeed his Highness did delight to honor Silvain as they drank and sang in the castle that night. For he set him on his right hand where the Count of Angoulême should have been and talked to him instead of to Dunois, who was on his left. Therefore the Count of Angoulême and the great lords rose from the table early as men affronted, and when Dunois tried to take his Highness away to make amends he was answered petulantly and went alone.

"My lord, I do you ill service if you lose old friends for me," Silvain said gently.

"Let them go to the ——. They have never brought me good. Hold by me and I will hold by you, Silvain," says his highness.

The wine flowed, and they sat late.

But Silvain was up betimes and saw men getting to horse in the courtyard, some half-dozen who were lightly armed and with them the swarthy, short knight whom he knew as D'Albret. Silvain went on to Thibaut's lodging, and as he went saw that D'Albret had taken the road to Amboise.

All was well with Messire Thibaut, and Silvain shared his breakfast of salted venison. But while he ate men came into the house and were talking with the saddler's wife.

"It is merry where you lodge, brother," Silvain said.

"Alas, my lord, the woman is comely."

Thibaut rolled his eyes.

"But a good woman else."

The noise grew.

"I do not praise these gallants," said Silvain. "I think they are not nice."

There was movement and a fall. The woman screamed.

Silvain came down-stairs. He saw her handled among a party of gentlemen of the castle. One went this way and another that, hitting the floor to their surprize; and Silvain came to her and set her behind him.

"You are in the wrong," he said. "This is your sister."

"Here is the footboy!" one of them cried. "Have at him."

Silvain had no arms but his dagger; there were half a dozen of them, and some carried swords. He picked up a chair and fought with it, drawing back to the stair. The woman ran up, and from the windows above Messire Thibaut and she cried to the townfolk. Craftsmen and 'prentices tumbled out of their shops with tools and staves and pikes, and the gentlemen broke off the fight and ran.

"——'s faith, they are not gentle," Silvain said, for he was very angry.

He would not stay for the thanks of the saddler nor the saddler's wife; he made haste to the castle to seek those ungentle gentlemen.

But as he came to the gate another party met him—the duke's provost and a guard of archers; and the provost laid hands on him and said—

"Sir Silvain, you are my prisoner."

"Am I so?" Silvain laughed. "Who told you that?"

"It is an order," the provost said sulkily. "It is the order of the Count of Angoulême."

"What, do you take orders of any but the duke? Bring me to his Highness. We are his men, you and I."

So into the hall they marched; and there the duke sat with the great lords close about him, shifting and fretting like a spoiled child.

Then the Count of Anglouléme cried out:

"Why do you bring the knave here? Away with him."

"Who speaks against me?" Silvain said quickly. "Let him speak, and I have his answer. But I am your knight, my lord—" he set his eyes on the duke—"and I hold by you."

The duke tossed in his chair and rolled his little head.

"Will you suffer this, my lord?" Angoulême cried. "The rogue struck down my son and raised the town upon him. ——'s blood, if I have no justice on the knave's body I am done with you."

"If your son has fought with me this day, he was one of six who took sword to a naked man. Such a knight is he. And what he fought for was to do violence to a woman. Such a knight is he."

"This is beyond all! He lies, my lord; like a knave he lies."

Silvain laughed.

"You have said. Who pays the forfeit? Who will come against me to uphold you speak true?"

The great lords broke out upon him. He was impudent; he was a shameless rogue; he was vermin. But Dunois growled out:

"It is a challenge. He is in his right," and he stared frowning at Silvain.

"He! A nameless man, no man's son!" Angoulême raged. "Honor of God, my lord, must I bid you choose between him and me?"

His Highness looked at Silvain and looked away. His Highness was peevish and shrill.

"Why the —— should you brawl?" he said. "All this work about a woman!"

"A girl in the town," Angoulême sneered. "One of his own kind."

"An honest man's wife," Silvain said.

Angoulême laughed.

"His sister, he called her. Honest wench and honest man."

"Why, my lord, to a true knight every woman but one is his sister. Good faith, did you never learn that till now?"

But that made an end of his cause. They were all jeering at him.

"—— help us, must you preach?" the duke cried. "That is worst of all. Away with him, Hugo. Shut him up and give us peace."

In a cell where the light came through a long loop-hole Silvain had leisure to meditate upon the royal nature of his highness of Orléans. He had been fed; and it was late, and the day was fading out of that cell when the Provost Hugo of Gien turned the key in the door and came in. The provost had drunk wine; the provost was sportive. In this style—arms akimbo, thick of speech:

"Why now, you look as sad as a dying dog! Bear up, lad; you have many a day to bear. The duke has forgot you already. And when he forgets——"

The Provost made a sound like the gurgle of an empty bottle.

"Faith, you had a short day. I never knew a fellow that made so little of his luck."

The provost laughed in his chest.

"Dear child, to hear you preach at Angoulême! That was rare!"

"I am glad to make you merry," said Silvain and stood up.

"Bless your sweet innocence! It was himself that set his fellows to pick a quarrel with you. Why darling, the thing was all planned to put you down because you took his lordship's place at table."

"But that is not my shame," said Silvain gently.

"By my body, I call it shame to be a goose. But what the —— brought you to throw for my lord's favor? That is no game for you, sweet chuck."

"Indeed, you are right," Silvain said and struck at his jaw.

He fell, and he lay; and before his strength came back to him he was tied up in his own girdle, and his scrip was thrust into his mouth. Then Silvain took his keys and opened the door and stole out and locked it again. On the stair he lingered, scanning the courtyard. It was twilight, and few men were there. He went out by the stables, came into the courtyard again by another archway and so made for the gate and out, none challenging him.

As Thibaut sat at supper with the saddler and the saddler's wife he was disturbed by a whistle that he knew. He came out to find Silvain with their own two horses and the mare Dragon.

"Mount and ride, brother," Silvain said in his ear. "I am gone by the road to Amboise," and he went off on the mare.

He was a mile out of the town when Thibaut caught him up with his mail clattering on the led horse. Then he stopped and put on breast-plate and thigh-pieces and buckled on his sword.

"*Brrr*, this wind is cold," said Thibaut. "I think it has changed. What shall be done to the man that the king delighted to honor? Do you know yet, my lord?"

"Here is no king nor honor, brother. We have both to win. Ride on."

"Into the dark," Thibaut grumbled. "It is your joy; but, by my body, it is not mine, as the hen said to the fox when he ate her."

All night they rode and at dawn slept in the woods and, coming over the river into Amboise, there sought news of a short, swarthy knight who rode with some half-dozen men. They heard of him on the road to Tours. They found him at nightfall in a village in the forest, but he had shed some of his men.

"I have good fortune to find you, Sir Alain," Silvain smiled.

"So have not I," said the Sieur D'Albret, glowering at him. "What have you to do here, my gallant?"

"I seek honor with you."

The Sieur D'Albret swore.

"I have no work for your page-boy tricks. The duke is mad to send you into this."

Silvain looked down.

"Sir, I dare not say you are wrong," he said modestly. "But I will do my endeavor that his Highness shall not forget me."

"Do you know what venture this is?" D'Albret drew close.

"Why, sir, yes."

Silvain opened his eyes.

"You ride to seize the king."

"Speak soft, fool. Mark me now. This is no boy's sport. If we win, Madame Anne will raise the —— to hang you. And if we lose, I will send you to the —— by my own hand."

He laughed.

"Now will you venture? Go play your games with the duke, boy."

"Alas, my lord, if I go back there is no honor for me," Silvain said. "I must do as I can."

* * *

SO IN the morning they rode together into the forest, a grim and silent company, for the Sieur D'Albret would speak neither of his plans nor anything else, and like a surly dog he watched Silvain and Thibaut. They made toward Tours but halted at noon in a covert of bracken and there waited till two of the men whom D'Albret had shed came back to him. After much talk apart the two men went off again toward Tours, and D'Albret led his party back. That night they slept in the forest and at dawn rode westward again till they were not many miles from Tours. Then D'Albret made his men scatter and hide, but kept Silvain and Thibaut under his eye.

The plan was growing plain. From the time he could sit a horse the boy king had been sent hunting to cure his sickliness. He had learned a passion for it and rode hard and wild, and the Sieur D'Albret had a line ready for him to ride. The men who had been sent on came back trailing a drag of dirty, bleeding flesh and made away toward Amboise.

Soon Silvain heard horses moving through the coverts, but not many. The pack was waiting to be laid on and the field waiting with them while a few couple of tufters found and roused a stag. With the tufters rode the king's huntsman and the king. The hounds worked through one covert and another; they found the scent of the drag and went off, and after them came the king at speed.

"Turn them, my lord; turn them," the huntsman cried, spurring after him. "The —— knows what they have found."

One of D'Albret's men shot out of the covert and rode him down and took his horn and was gone, and in a moment that horn was sounding far away. D'Albret waited awhile till he heard the field and the pack moving off. Then he turned to Silvain, and for the first time he smiled.

"Now ride for your neck," he said and pointed on.

"I like this venture," Silvain said; and Thibaut and he and their three horses followed the king, and after them came D'Albret, urging them on.

They found the king two miles away where the drag ended, lashing his whip at puzzled hounds. D'Albret ranged alongside and caught his bridle.

"Forward, sir; forward," he cried. "Your stag is running yet!"

"Let me be," the boy cried. "Villain, do you not know me? I am the king."

"I know you well, my lord," D'Albret laughed, "and I will show you a royal chase. As far as Orléans. Good faith, you need no hand on the bridle, you ride so well."

He snatched the reins away and set the horse going.

"What are you doing with me?" the boy whimpered. "You are a wicked knave to serve me so. I am the king.

"God save you, you shall be king. I bring you to your cousin Louis of Orléans. He will make you king indeed."

"Are you Louis' man?"

"Sir, he sent me for you. Trust me, you shall be with him tomorrow."

"I like Louis," the boy said. "But my sister will be angry."

"Your sister!" D'Albret laughed. "You are the king. You go where you will."

The boy laughed.

"*Madame* will be very angry," he said and laughed again.

But soon he was asking to have the reins in his hand, and D'Albret would not trust him, and he fell to scolding and whimpering.

They were mighty ill friends before they came to the river where D'Albret's men were waiting. The matter was not mended when the king found that the horses must swim the river. He raged, he flung himself out of the saddle and ran away and was brought back by the collar, a very wretched little king.

"Play me that trick again and I will tie your feet together under his belly, ——'s blood I will," D'Albret stormed as he dumped the lad on the horse again. "The —— go with you all!"

He shook his fist at his men.

"Why do you sit gaping? Try back; look if we be followed; we have lost time enough. Hold off who comes. And you—" he scowled at the king—"you will be wet enough without crying. What a babe it is! You there," he called to Silvain, who was modestly aloof, "you do nothing, for all your brag. Give him a lead!"

Silvain rode out and bowed to the king and looked at him full and set his horse at the water.

"Who is that knight?" the king gaped.

"Some beggar o' horseback," D'Albret said. "On, on. Where he goes, you can go safe."

The king said nothing and began to whimper again as the water came to his saddle. To cross was no great matter. The river was wide, and the stream ran strong but not deep. The horses had not more than a few yards to swim here and there, and soon they were climbing the steep dike on the northern shore.

D'Albret shouted to his men to follow and rode on toward Château-Renault till dark. For some time the little king had been mourning that he was hungry and tired and cold, but so cold. They gave him what cloaks they had and dried venison and drier bread; they built him a fire and picketed their horses, and he sighed himself to sleep. And when all were still Silvain stole away by the fire into the dark.

In the middle of the night D'Albret was wakened by heat and noise. He started up to see the undergrowth about them in flames and hear the horses stamp and whinny in the smoke.

Silvain was on his feet too.

"By my faith, this has gone far enough," he said and called to Thibaut and ran to the horses.

D'Albret kicked his men out of their sleep; but before he had them up and doing, the maddened horses had won free and were bolting away from the fire.

Through the rolling smoke Silvain and Thibaut hardly brought back their three and had much ado to quiet them and make them stand. D'Albret's men were scattered in the dark upon a hopeless chase.

"Here is strange fortune, sir," said Silvain gently. "Who could be ready for this?"

"The ——'s own fortune," said D'Albret. "But, praise God, here is something saved. Up with you, lad, and drive the beasts back to us," and he shouted to his scattered men and cursed them. "Body of ——, must you stay for a saddle?"

For both Silvain and Thibaut were laboring with girths.

"What is he to do?" the little king whimpered. "Let us go; oh, let us go. The fire is upon us here."

"Bah, must you be whining!" D'Albret growled. "Ride, lad; ride."

Thibaut swung to the saddle and moved off with the led horse.

"What the —— do you want with two?" D'Albret cried. "Leave him to me, fool."

Silvain mounted and caught up the boy.

"Neither horse nor man, by my faith," said he and drove in his spurs and rode down the Sieur D'Albret and galloped off into the dark.

The little king laughed loud.

"That was brave! Oh, to see him go down! That was brave!"

"My lord, do not say so. He was afoot and unready. There is no honor in that."

"Fie, he was a villain. He laid hands on me. I hope you killed him."

"So do not I, my lord. For it was no fair fight."

"Why, you killed my leopard."

Silvain laughed.

"Alas, my lord, you have not forgotten? And now I lay hands on you. What will you do to me for all?"

"I will have you fight for me," the boy said.

"Good faith, I ask no better."

Silvain bent and kissed his hand.

Then they set him on the led horse and made for Tours.

IN THE morning when the town was near and their horses weary, a lad came riding to meet them and called to them to stand.

"Peace, brother. You know me," Silvain cried. "You are my fair boy of the river."

"Why, it is the page Bayard!" the king cried.

The boy took off his cap.

"My lord, God be praised you are safe and free. Sir Silvain has great fortune."

"Were you sent to look for me?"

"No, my lord. They search the forest for you. But there are posts on all the northern roads watching for the duke's army, and I have one!"

"Oh, they do not look for me! I must look to myself. Well, ride in, Bayard, and tell *madame* that I come."

The page bowed and galloped away; and they rode on past pickets of archers and men-at-arms, past a strong guard at the bridge-head and over the long bridge into Tours, and it was cheering all the way.

"This sounds of war, my lord," Silvain said.

"I should like to fight Louis," said the king.

So Silvain came back to that palace; but now the courtyard was full of armed men; and Trémoille, running out among them, had worked to set them in such order that there was a way clear for the king.

He came to hold the king's horse.

"Thank God you have escaped, sir. We——"

"It is a shame that I was taken," the boy said. "It is not by you I have escaped. Hold my horse, Silvain."

Trémoille stood back, and the little king came down into Silvain's arms. He had need of them.

"My lord, I have been in prayer for you all night," a low voice said.

Madame Anne stood in the doorway, wan and grave.

"Prayers!" the boy laughed. "I have been fighting."

"Please you, come in, my lord. Let me hear of it."

"Go in then. Why do we stand here? I am as tired as death."

Madame Anne bent her head and led the way, and the boy tottered on Silvain's arm.

In the hall he flung himself into a chair and scowled at his sister.

"You are wise, *madame*, are not you? Here you have all these knights-in-arms, but you let cousin Louis' men come into the forest and take me."

"My lord, you promised me that you would not ride alone. You had knights enough in your train. I am not pleased with you."

"Oh, you would be pleased if I was dead? But I am not to die to please you, *madame*. I have beaten them!" the boy laughed unsteadily. "Cousin Louis will be sad and sorry today. I beat his best men."

"Who took you, my lord?"

"I do not know them. A black knight was their leader. By my father's soul, he was a great, strong knave and he had twenty as good as he. They took me while I was hunting and did not see them. I swam the Loire on my horse, for I thought to escape them so. But they were too many. When they halted and slept I got to my horse in the dark and broke through them and rode down the black knight and so away."

He looked sidewise at Silvain.

"And this good fellow, he showed me the way back to Tours."

"I will give a golden cross to the altar of our Lady of Cléry," said Madame Anne.

"Give me the gold, Anne," the boy grinned. "I did it. By my faith, it was a brave venture."

Madame Anne turned her pale eyes on Silvain.

"You were with him, Sir Silvain de St. Lo?"

"The king has said, *madame*."

"What more do you know?"

"No more than the king, *madame.*"

"What do you ask for your part?"

"What the king has promised. That I should fight in his cause."

"He is a good fellow," the king cried out. "I should like to see him fight Louis. He can ride with Trémoille. He rides much better. Oh, let him go. I am so hungry."

He beat upon the table and called peevishly to the servants.

"The king thanks you, sir," Madame Anne said, looking at Silvain. "You are in my remembrance."

It was worth at least a breakfast, as breakfasts went under the frugal rule of Madame Anne; and while he ate Trémoille came and sat beside him.

"You have made friends, sir," he smiled.

"Sir, I hope to make one more."

"I have no ill will. Nor good neither. For I can not tell what man you are. But thus it is. I am bidden find some place for you, and no high place can I give. We march against the Duke of Orléans. Is your heart in it?"

"Sir, my heart and all of me. Let me ride behind you, a lonely knight."

"You ask little."

Trémoille stared at him.

"I do not ask what is not given," Silvain said.

* * *

MESSIRE THIBAUT, heavily asleep in the hay, was not pleased when Silvain climbed to the loft and called him to saddle.

"'What ill have I done to you?' quoth the dog to the flea," Thibaut groaned and cracked his jaws in a yawn. "Where do we go now, my lord?"

"We go to war, brother," Silvain said. "Make my shield bright."

"Whose war is this? I am dizzy. He must learn to fight his own tail who rides with you."

"We fight for the king."

"Good faith, is that all he gave you? Put not your trust in princes; it is in the Scripture."

"I ask no more, brother. For the king and for France I fight, and so bring back my name to good renown."

Thibaut groaned.

"What has your name done for you that you should labor for your name?"

"Why, brother, it is all that a man has at first and at last. So is he made, it is only his name can live forever here upon earth. I came into France with an outlaw's name. I bear the name of a knight of the king. Who knows what name I shall leave when I die?"

Before that day was done the Sieur de la Trémoille led his array over the long bridge and marched north. He had a goodly muster of knights and mounted men, for though the great lords were with the Duke of Orléans or sulking in their own lands, those of less account were mindful that the old king had fostered them. But Trémoille's strength was in archers and men-at-arms on foot, levies of the people to whom the king was all, and soldiers of fortune who took the king's pay.

On the next day when they marched on from their bivouac they had news that the duke was riding against them with a great company. Trémoille halted in the flat fields and set his order of battle where a stream made sodden ground in their front; and, mingling archers and spearmen in the center, he set his knights on either flank. The word went round that it was to be a fight without quarter.

"'I will not spare you,' said the stag to the hounds, as he lay in covert." Thibaut grimaced. "Surely this is a war of fools."

But Silvain frowned and he said to the knight beside him—

"Sir, that was no gallant word."

"Trémoille fights keen, sir. He fights to win."

The duke's array came on fast, all mounted men in a broad stream of glittering steel. It halted out of bowshot; it came into line and was arrayed in two divisions. Trumpets pealed, and the smaller band moved away to the flank and swung hither and thither and on a sudden rode at the horsemen guarding Trémoille's right.

"That is Dunois," Silvain said. "He comes on nobly."

He kept his knights together; the charge crashed home on men who tried in vain to gather speed to meet the shock and drove them headlong in disarray.

"By my faith, that was masterly done," said Silvain. "Let him turn now and charge the footmen. Oh, my lord, where is your trumpet? Turn, or you fail your fortune."

"Which side are you on sir?" says the knight beside him.

"Why, sir, I like to see a fight well fought."

That wing was broken utterly, and Dunois' horsemen pursued it till themselves were scattered and far away. But, in good heart from their success, the second band of the duke's array came on and charged at the footmen.

"This is the great attack, sir. God give us strength! This is the duke himself."

"He is in haste," said Silvain sadly.

And indeed his knights came so fast that their line was broken before the arrows found them and beat down man and horse. The sodden ground checked them; and in disorder, not with the weight of one blow, they came upon the spearmen. The spears stood fast, and they were checked and held.

Some still tried to thrust through; others drew off to make ground for another charge, and the trumpet sounded a rally. While they were falling back scattered over the fields Trémoille led his unbroken horsemen upon them. They could not gather together; they could not make speed to meet the shock; they were shattered and swept away.

Dunois rode back with a little weary company and found a lost fight and charged on boldly to save what he could. But Trémoille had his horsemen still in hand, and they rode down that charge; and then the footmen broke rank and ran in to beat down the dismounted and kill the fallen and strip the dead.

Messire Thibaut rode on to the field with slow and melancholy dignity and stared through the sunset light.

"Now where are you gone, child, as the hen said to the gosling. God be with you, are you changing sides again? It is the hour you would choose."

And he looked in vain for the shield with the golden star and very sadly began to plunder.

SILVAIN was far off then, charging with two or three a little band of the duke's knights who had turned on the pursuit to bring their master off. They did loyally, but through the clash Silvian rode and left the dismounted to fight out their fight and followed the duke.

"Sir, will you fall to a blow in the back?" he cried as he came up.

The duke swerved, saw but the one man and turned upon him. Silvain drove his horse on, stooping low over its neck and holding his sword like a lance. The duke was hurled from the saddle. Silvain sprang down and knelt beside him.

"Do you yield yourself, my lord?"

But the duke made no answer. Silvain opened his vizor and laid bare the little face, red and drenched with sweat.

"I know you well, my lord. And you know me."

He opened his own helmet.

Then the duke swore at him for a treacherous rogue.

"Alas, my lord, that is not fit for you to say nor me to hear," Silvain said gently.

Then the duke laughed and said that it was trick for trick and Silvain had put him down.

"Come, mount me and let us begone. By my faith, you are the best knight in France, and I will make you as rich as any."

"Here is no trick, my lord," said Silvain sadly. "I am the king's knight, and I have taken you this day. Do you yield yourself?"

He stood up and picked up his sword.

"Villain, would you kill me where I lie?"

"Many a knight of yours has been killed this day. But I kill no prisoners."

"I am your prisoner," the duke cried.

Silvain knelt and raised him.

"My lord, I pray that you have no hurt."

The duke's gilt armor was scarred and smirched with dust and blood.

"To the —— with your prayers," he said. "But hear me now, friend. I am your prisoner, not the king's."

"My lord, I am the king's and all of mine."

"Villain, you mean my death."

"God forbid, my lord."

But while they talked there came down upon them a company of the footmen who had taken horses and were seeking more booty.

"Go your way, brothers," Silvain called. "Here is nothing for you. I am a knight of the king's and this my prisoner."

"A cheat! A cheat! The king takes no prisoners. No quarter this day."

Silvain sprang on his horse as they made at him and drew aside and then crashed into them, crying—

"For the king, for the king!"

The weight of him in his armor clove into them, and he laid about him with good will. He beat down one and another; he scattered them and caught a horse and brought it to the duke.

"I pray you, my lord, mount and ride. Here is no safety."

"Where shall I go?" the duke mourned. "There is no safety anywhere for me."

"By my faith, I will bring you safe to the king."

"You bring me safe to my death! For the love of God, Silvain, join with me now and let us ride for Châteaudun and I will give you lands to your desire."

"Let us forget that is said, my lord," Silvain said gently. "Ride on."

So through the dusk and the night they found the road to Tours, and weary horses and weary men came into the town when the sun was high. The duke rode with his vizor down; but Silvain's head was bare; and his eyes shone.

In the hall of the palace the Sieur de la Trémoille told of his victory to the king and the king's sister and the court, a proud man that day.

"So it has gone, my lord. There is but one army now, and that the king's. There is but one power in France, and that the king's."

He knelt and kissed the boy's hand.

"My lord, I thank you this was given me to do."

Madame Anne sat still, watching him with grave eyes. But the little king laughed.

"Was it bloody, Trémoille?"

"Some have died for you, my lord. And many who came against you lie dead."

"Is cousin Louis killed?" the boy said eagerly.

"His body is not on the field. I think that he has fled."

"You could not catch him?"

"His captains are taken, my lord. We have Dunois and the Count of Angoulême and——"

"Alive? *Madame* said I had no need of prisoners. Did you not say so, *madame?*"

There was a murmur among the grave men at the council table.

"God forbid," said the Archbishop of Tours.

"God forbid that we should be quick to shed blood," said Madame Anne. "The Duke of Orléans has escaped then. You have taken the cubs, Trémoille, but the wolf is away."

There was a murmur at the door of the hall, and Silvain's voice came clear.

"Here is one whom the king would have. Open to him."

"Why, that is my man Silvain calls," the boy cried and started from his seat. "Open; yes, open."

Madame Anne looked at Trémoille, who laughed.

"This is not of me, *madame*, God knows what the fellow has done now."

Silvain came, leading by the hand the duke. Still he kept his vizor down; and as he dragged himself along, bent under the weight of his smirched armor, none knew him.

"Why, Silvain, what foul fellow have you brought me?" the little king cried.

Silvain knelt before him.

"My lord, I bring you the Duke of Orléans, who is your prisoner and craves your grace."

"Cousin Louis!" the boy laughed shrill. "Oh, cousin Louis, are you taken? Show yourself, cousin Louis."

The duke put up his vizor.

"Mock me, my lord," he muttered. "That is noble," and he looked about him and saw Madame Anne and scowled at her.

"You stand bold in your treason," she said softly, and she smiled.

Then Silvain said:

"My lord, I have taken him who was your enemy. Say, if I have earned some honor of you."

"That was good service," said Madame Anne. "It shall not lack honor."

"I pray you, give him his life," said Silvain. "That only I ask."

A faint flush came into *madame's* wan cheeks, and her eyes flickered.

The grave men at the council table looked at each other.

"God forbid that he should die," the archbishop said. "He has yielded himself."

"We will not hang you, cousin; no," the little king laughed.

"God forbid that we should be swift to shed blood," said Madame Anne. "Why does the man kneel?"

"To thank my lord for this great honor," said Silvain and bowed low and went out.

When he had eaten and was lying down to sleep in a little bare room off the guard-room there came to him the page Bayard and said that the Sieur de la Trémoille asked for him.

Trémoille sat at ease in a loose gown and laughed.

"Why, is it you have found him? Look at him well, Bayard, that you may never be like him."

"Sir, do not mock me," Bayard said. "I know well I shall not be such as he is. For he is the most noble knight that serves the king."

"Go your ways."

Trémoille waved him out.

"So you please a child, friend," he sneered.

Silvain smiled.

"God forgive me if I am too proud of that," he said gently.

"Your pride has little meat. What the —— do you want of the world? You have broken yourself this day. You might have had a king's ransom for that fool's head, and you must bring him in and ask his life. That is what Madame Anne will never forgive you if you live a thousand years."

"It is in my mind that I have the more honor," Silvain said.

Trémoille sat frowning and smiling.

"Good faith, I can not tell what you are. Is it a saint in arms or a fool, Silvain?"

"Sir, I am a lonely knight who seeks honor and fortune."

"Fortune!"

Trémoille laughed.

"You have more ways to lose it than ever I knew."

"Yet the child gave me honor," Silvain said gently.

# "OLD NAVY" DAYS

## by A. X. Yeoman

"THE Navy ain't what she used to be," say the old-timers.

To which the recruits retort—"No—and she *never was!*"

Allowing that the "old" is always that Navy in which the narrator enlisted, the "new" that in which whatever "boots" he addresses made their beginning, it remains that the Navy *ain't* what she used to be. She can't be, for a certain warrant gunner made Two-Striper—full lieutenant—and retired.

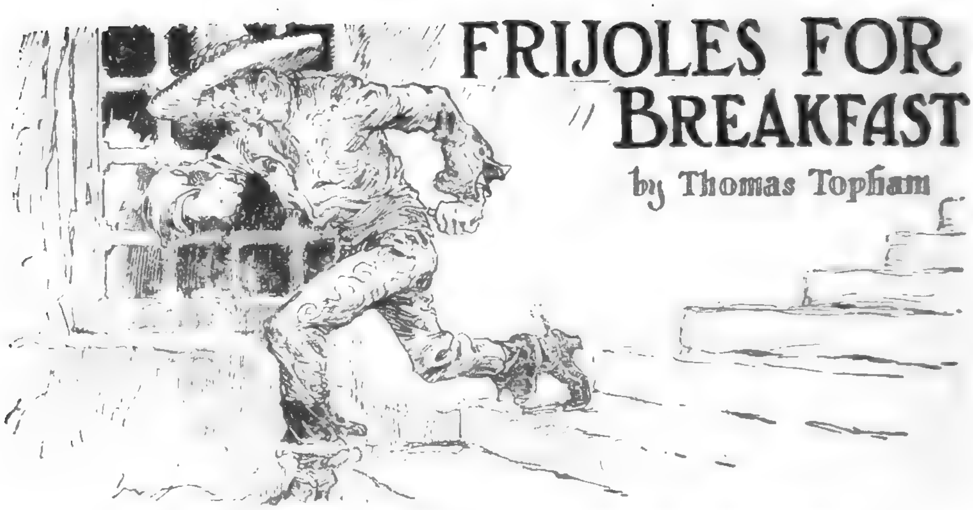
Several years ago, when we old-timers were hunting pie-checks and swab-combs and hammock-ladders and the key to the parade-ground, the gunner was attached to a certain shore-station. His official duty was acting as recorder for summary courts-martial. This job, be it known, is a sinecure if the accused pleads guilty. Then it is necessary only to fill in a single printed sheet. If, however, he pleads *not* guilty, testimony is taken; lots of style and also lots of work for recorder and yeoman.

The gunner was a queer fish. He read high-brow books; spouted Shakespeare by the fathom; all that. In the court-martial room he sat dreamily while testimony was tested; with direct- and cross-examination conflicting; rebuttal and surrebuttal re-ing and sur-ing. Never a note he made. But afterward, always he handed the courts-yeoman for typing a complete transcript of the trial; sarcastic questions, brilliant answers. Nobody could understand his system. But the truth came out at last.

The Judge Advocate General of the Navy, no less, wished to know—indeed he was most curious to learn—how came the Navy's educational standard had been so uplifted. It was noted, remarked the J. A. G., that criminals who couldn't read a boat-schedule fluently enough to find the right boat back, defended themselves with wit, eloquence, point; discussed the Darwinian theory or the temperature of the fourth dimension or similar trifles, with neat quotations from Milton or Aristotle or Lydia Pinkham heaved in free-gratis.

The commandant invited the gunner to visit him. He asked how-come. The gunner had nothing to conceal, not he: It was utterly foolish to sit listening to those hammer-heads. They knew nothing of rhetoric, far less of logic. Their stuttering imitation of conversation inevitably reminded any intelligent man of the Seal Rocks at fish-time. So he, the gunner, as recorder ignored what they said. Instead of recording what they might say, he set down what they *should* have said, considering this a kindness to all concerned.

No, the Navy ain't what she used to be. There's no color to courts-martial now.



# FRIJOLES FOR BREAKFAST

### by Thomas Topham

*Author of "The Bumping-Off of Brute Kenton," "Captain Tookle Tames a Queen," etc.*

THE general sniffed at a plate of beans that his faithful aide had just placed before him.

"Frijoles! Frijoles! Frijoles!" he bellowed, his pudgy cheeks puffing out like two toy balloons. "It is frijoles for breakfast, for luncheon, for dinner, for supper. Who, I ask you, I implore you, ever heard of frijoles for breakfast? My stomach rises like the tide of the sea when I observe frijoles."

The frightened aide backed toward the door.

"Excellency," he stammered, "it is all that the commissary affords."

He spread his hands in a wide gesture, shrugged his shoulders.

"We are down to frijoles, your excellency, and wormy ones. The commissary is empty except for frijoles. We are all subsisting on them. Those you have are hand-picked, with very few worms in them."

The face of the redoubtable general took on a hue of deep purple.

"You would feed the liberator of Mexico a few worms, would you?" he bawled, rising and grasping the plate of beans. "Bah! That I, General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, once on the road to a palace, should come to this! That for your frijoles!"

With deadly aim the general hurled the plate of beans at his faithful aide. The aide ducked too late. Beans filled his hair, his mouth, his ears, trickled soppingly down the collar of his ragged shirt.

"This is the reward for my faithfulness," sobbed the aide. "I spent many weary hours picking out the worms."

The general, in a moment, was all contrition for his hasty act.

"Ah, my brave Hipolito!" he cried. "I, General Urquiza, your commander, beg of you a hundred pardons. Do not be angry. We have campaigned long together, my Hipolito. My anger at my own stupidity overcame me."

With a clumsy hand the general helped his brave Hipolito fish beans from his ears.

"It is time, my dear Hipolito, that we improved our station in life," declared the general. "There are stirrings to the east and much juicy picking for brave souls. I shall lead my intrepid band into Sonora, a fat land, and now that the great Villa is dead, who knows, I may yet head a formidable revolution, may win from the Government a great hacienda. And then we shall get rid of frijoles for breakfast, luncheon, dinner and supper."

"Excellency, the plan has my profound admiration," said Hipolito. "The commissary is very low. As I said, there are only frijoles——"

"Halt!" cried the general, a harassed glint in his wicked little eyes. "But utter the word 'frijoles' again and I shall order you shot. How many brave souls do we muster?"

"Twenty-one."

"It is enough," announced the general.

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"Frijoles for Breakfast," copyright, 1924, by Thomas Topham.

"With twenty-one intrepid troopers we can do great things." His voice took on a hint of wistfulness. "Twenty-one left out of a troop of two hundred. To such a state have I descended!"

He threw off the note of melancholy and with a soldierly air turned again to his aide—

"It is my order that we take to horse at the noon hour."

To such a state, indeed, had the brave General Urquiza descended. Once the scourge of northern Lower California, the general had rapidly descended the scale through patriotic revolutionary leader, irreconcilable, bandit—under pretense of continuing the fight for liberty—and at last plain outlaw.

General Urquiza surveyed the bare, one-room, tumble-down adobe hut that he was occupying as "headquarters" deep in the inhospitable Baja California hills. It was time he was moving, he thought, as he looked around. When a general who had been invited to help draw up the "Plan of Guadalupe" came to such a pass that he had nothing but frijoles to eat for breakfast, it was high time that he moved.

The general peeked out the glassless window to see the effect of his orders. Mexican bandit-soldiers were beginning to move listlessly. A few were packing meager belongings. He saw his faithful aide come rushing excitedly from the old corral where the horses were kept. For a Mexican bandit he moved very rapidly. He came on to the adobe house.

"Excellency," he panted, "your noble horse is gone!"

"My charger gone?" shouted the general in dismay. "Where?"

"I tremble to tell you," cried the aide, "but be brave, my general. The Russians who are in the settlement below sent ten strong, bewhiskered fellows last night. We were asleep. They captured the faithful guard who was on duty, and they took your beautiful charger and two other horses that you had requisitioned from them. And they made dire threats, they left word with the bound guard that if any more horses were requisitioned they would come up and wipe out your band."

"The nameless thieves," roared the general, prancing with rage. "I told them when I requisitioned the horses that when I had realized my ambitions they should be paid handsomely for the brutes. But the guard who allowed this outrage, he shall be shot. Ah-h, he shall be shot."

"Twenty," said the aide, dolefully.

"Twenty what?" demanded the general.

"Twenty men left if the guard is shot," replied Hipolito with deep melancholy. "Our band is dwindling."

He saluted, turned toward the door, marched away bravely to carry out his commander's orders.

"Hold!" thundered General Urquiza. "We can ill spare one man. Your generous intercession has saved him. Reserve his horse for me. He shall run or double up with another as best he may. But to horse at once. We shall not wait for the noon hour. We shall teach the Russian foreigners a lesson. We shall descend upon them in force, take back our property and replenish our commissary."

This was pleasing news to the bandit band. The ragged cavalcade, remnant of a once proud force that had held Mexicali and even threatened Ensenada, threaded its tortuous way out of the mountain defiles. At noon they stopped and ate frijoles from their meager store. The frijoles threw the general into a rage, but he ate them, daintily picking out the worms. As they started again the general told off four of his brave troopers, men famous for their daring exploits.

"Quijada, Orizaba, Salinas, de la Sierra, you will take upon yourselves to gather supplies," he ordered. "The Russians are wonderful eaters. Nothing must stop you. Gather good supplies, hams, bacon, canned goods from *los Estados Unidos*, meal, flour, sugar, coffee. We shall banquet when we have taught these cousins of the gringos their lesson.

They swept into the Russian settlement, firing their rifles wildly and met a reception fit for a general. Rifles cracked back at them from behind the sturdy walls of Russian houses. Before he could order a dignified retreat, General Urquiza's troopers were fleeing and the general was constrained to follow. The Russians had anticipated a raid after taking back their horses.

Five miles from the settlement the fleeing bandits began to reduce their speed. The general, who had passed many of his troopers in his anxiety to head them off, began to gather them back into the semblance of a band. He drew them up along a deep arroyo, which, in case of pursuit, would be suitable either as a defense or a place to hide. There were fifteen.

From afar they could see two more horsemen approaching. As they came nearer Hipolito cried out that they were members of the band. General Urquiza sent out his aide to meet them and guide them to the hiding-place.

"Quijada, Salinas, of the foraging detail!" exclaimed the general as he beheld that both of his foragers had sacks across their saddles. "Faithful men who obeyed orders in the face of danger. Ah, the Russian curs, we shall yet have revenge. I shall remember you, *compadres*, in my hour of triumph. You shall both be colonels when the great day comes."

Compadre Salinas saluted.

"*Señor el general*," he reported, "we did the best we could. The Russians fought savagely, as you know, but following your orders we sought out supplies. Twice we were driven back and our brave companions, de la Sierra and Orrizaba fell dying. But back we dashed and snatched supplies from beneath the enemy's very guns."

Both troopers tumbled their sacks to the ground. General Urquiza leaped toward the supplies. He felt the outside of a sack. His face swelled. He felt the second sack, stood up, threw out his chest and bestowed a baleful glare upon his two surviving foragers.

"Ah-h, you shall be shot," he hissed. "Foragers of a truth, you are. Take them out and shoot them down like dogs. They have brought us nothing but frijoles."

"Fifteen," croaked Hipolito, the general's aide.

"Fifteen what?" exploded General Urquiza.

"If your excellency carries out your decree," explained the aide, "there will be but fifteen of us left."

The general turned on his heel. Tears dimmed his eyes. After all, these foragers of his had done their best, had braved death to follow his orders.

"I, General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, give these men back their lives," he announced, turning fiercely to hide his emotion. "The death decree is rescinded."

As there was no sign of pursuit the band camped that night in the arroyo and they ate frijoles. However, they were better frijoles than they had been having and the general's spirits rose. He rolled into a ragged blanket satisfied that *mañana*—tomorrow—he would have better success. He knew a hacienda where they had more than frijoles.

The stars came out. The little band of bandits slept, the two sentries slept. Silently down the arroyo crept a troop of Mexican Federal soldiers, who had long been hoping for General Urquiza to emerge from his lair in the mountains.

A SENTRY awakened in time to shoot once, and then the short, sharp fight began. Men cursed and struggled in the dark. Rifles spat, the thud of falling bodies resounded, groans filled the air. But the bandits, trapped, had no chance.

The sun was high in the heavens the next day when General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza and his faithful aide Hipolito emerged from a crevice of the arroyo where they had taken refuge at the first sound of battle. The general had marked the crevice as a likely hiding spot before he had trusted himself to sleep. He had cunningly pulled down a section of crumbling earth that had covered their retreat.

The Federals had gone with their prisoners. Four bandits lay sprawled on the bed of the arroyo. General Urquiza searched their pockets, but the Federals had seen them first. The Federals had taken along all of the horses and even the two sacks of frijoles.

"*Dos*," Hipolito lamented mournfully.

"*Dos?*" asked the general with a sniffle. "Ah, yes, but two of us left, but our brave hearts are worth an army."

Hipolito was all for going back into the mountains. General Urquiza could not see the benefit of such a move.

"They will discover that I am not among their prisoners," explained the general, "and they will lie in wait in the mountains. It is a bold idea, my dear Hipolito, but I would be safer in Ensenada. I am not known there by sight, though my name is famous. I can pretend that I am a peon and perhaps take ship to a safer and more hospitable section."

Hipolito grudgingly gave in. Hungry and hot, the general and his aide plodded across the blistering Baja California landscape toward Ensenada. Occasionally they hid as they sighted travelers approaching.

As night drew on the lights of Ensenada appeared.

"It was here that we encamped," said the general sadly, "when we came with our brave troopers to capture the city."

"And it is here that I camp now," declared Hipolito, his courage oozing at sight of the town. "I do not intend to place my head in the lion's den. If you enter Ensenada you will repose this night in jail and tomorrow night you will sleep beneath the sod."

"Coward," hissed the general. "I shall take ship for Guaymas. I shall recruit a band of brave fellows and again strike a blow for liberty."

But Hipolito, the aide, was of weaker caliber. He suspected that Federal soldiers might spy him out, and he had no stomach for a firing-squad. So the intrepid general, Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, once the leader of a powerful troop, slunk alone into the town that he had threatened to storm and sack.

General Urquiza so far unbent as to shake hands with Hipolito in parting.

"*Uno,*" called Hipolito as the general stalked away. "There is but one of you left. *Viva, el general!*"

General Urquiza slid furtively up the almost deserted street of the picturesque and peaceful little port town, looked wistfully into a Spanish café out of which drifted rich, enticing odors of spiced foods.

He searched his pockets. Not a centavo. He pressed his nose against the glass of a store, but the sight of tamales wrapped in their corn-husks drove him on. He turned in at a saloon. An American bartender eyed him suspiciously.

"What will you have?" queried the bartender in Spanish.

"*Crême de Mocha.*"

"*Dinero?*" asked the bartender, looking the dusty and fat figure over coldly.

Money! To be asked for money before he got his drink! To such a state had the general descended!

He was on the point of revealing his identity, and in a lordly manner demanding his drink, but caution whispered that the *carcel* might be his answer. He had no desire to land in jail. He shrugged his shoulders.

"The air for you, you big bum," said the bartender loudly.

General Urquiza failed to comprehend the message which had been said in English, and the bartender rounded the bar with a rush.

General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza picked himself up from the street, rubbed a skinned elbow, and shook his fist at the *cantina* from which he had been so rudely ejected. He waddled down the long street with no particular aim in view, passed a few straggling Mexicans and several American tourists, slid into a bench on the diminutive plaza and gazed ruefully at the statue of the mighty Hidalgo.

There was light and laughter at the hotel above the plaza. A happy young lieutenant lounged toward the hotel. The general rose in trepidation. He had no use for soldiers—right then. He slunk unostentatiously along the hotel wall, passed up the walk and ducked ignominiously into a side street as the lieutenant seemed to be coming his way.

The general ran puffingly down the dark street. When he thought he was far enough away for safety he paused uneasily in the shadow of a building—and heard a woman weeping.

The first impulse of the brave general was to run again. He half-started when a deeper wail struck his ear. There could certainly be no danger in a woman weeping. She might be alone and there might be food in the house. The general's stomach was so desperately empty that the thought of food made him brave. With a full stomach he would have gone his way and left the weeper to weep out her heart, but he was a hungry wolf.

The general conceived the bold idea of talking to the woman with the prospect of getting her to the door, knocking her unconscious and then ransacking the house for food. He picked up a stone, crouched beside the barred window from which the sobbing seemed to come.

"*Señorita,*" called the general softly, "is there anything that a brave soul could do to aid thee?"

The weeping ceased instantly. Again the general called.

"Who are you?" came back the timid question.

"I?" asked the general in a surprized tone. "I am General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza."

There was a moment of silence.

"Ah," breathed a voice through the window, "my brave general, there is much you could do if you would."

"But name it, fair *señorita* in distress," said the general gallantly. "But open the door and I shall give thee any aid my strong arm can bestow."

He clutched the stone firmly in his hand.

"I can not," wailed the voice. "I am locked in this room. Oh, general, I have heard much of thee and thy deeds. If you could get me out your reward should be great."

General Urquiza was not prone to rush into any extravagant affair unless he could see the end. He would know more of this maiden in distress.

"Why are you locked in?" he asked incisively.

The *señorita* poured forth a tale of tragedy.

"My father and my brothers left our hacienda to go to Mexicali," she told him between tears. "I was sent here to Ensenada to visit my uncle in their absence. My Uncle Romero is a bold, scheming man. He is a friend of a rich merchant, Alejandro Hernandez, who would wed me, much against my will. My uncle and aunt have gone to see this scullion and locked me in. I fear they will return with him at any moment."

"Your father? Will he object?"

"My father would kill my uncle did he but know it," replied the girl hotly. "My father is Adolfo de Rosal, a rich man, and well would he reward the hero who would save his only daughter."

"Ah-h-h," breathed the crafty general, a scheme, ready-made, popping into his cunning mind.

Here was a chance to recoup his failing fortunes. He would rescue this girl, sequestrate her in the hills and collect ransom from her rich father. Under promise to restore her to her father he would go with her to a point close to her home, there keep her in captivity until the ransom was paid. He had, in his time, sequestrated a number of captives and collected fat ransoms.

"Quick," urged the general, "how can I break into this room? We shall fly. I shall take you home and restore you to this noble father of yours whom I know, nor claim any reward."

"There is a shed in the rear," said the girl, "and inside you will find an ax. With it you might be able to pry off these bars."

General Urquiza hastily got the ax. He puffed and blew at his unaccustomed labors, but he pried off two bars and aided the girl in climbing out.

"Your name?" asked the rescuer as he rested a moment from his exertions.

"Rosita de Rosal."

"Ah, Little Rose of the Rosebush," said the general gallantly, "we are both fugitives."

"We must fly, my general," whispered Rosita.

"An empty stomach furnishes poor wings," said the general sadly. "My exertions have made me ravenously hungry. I fear that I can not travel far in my emaciated condition."

"You are afraid to be seen in the cafés?" asked the girl, a slight note of scorn in her soft voice.

"*Senorita*," said the general earnestly, "had I but a few jingling pesos in my pocket I would brave all the *soldados* in Ensenada, yes, all in Baja California, and walk into a café. Unfortunately I left camp hastily on an urgent errand without so much as a peso with which to buy food or a drink of *vino*."

"Oh my brave general," cried Rosita, contritely, "you shall not go hungry. Forgive me!"

The girl extracted a gold coin from a silk mesh-bag she carried. She handed it to her escort.

"Eat, my gallant protector," she begged. "I shall hide here in the shadows. I have eaten. But you will come back to me, surely?"

"Of a certainty," swore General Urquiza, and he meant every word. Only his ravenous hunger drove him away for a moment from this chunk of ready money, but he felt that she would wait for him.

They crept up the dark street to the main thoroughfare. The fair Rosita crouched in the shadow of a wall.

"I shall stay here until you come for me," she whispered. "Go, but hasten."

General Urquiza swaggered across the street. He was a fine figure, although fat, and the girl's eyes followed him admiringly as he thus defied all the soldiers in Lower California. A general! Maybe a little run down at the heel, but still a general. "Señora Rosita de Rosal de Urquiza." She rolled the name over her tongue softly. It sounded amazingly well.

General Urquiza entered a café and seated himself. A waiter came to him.

"Will the *señor* enjoy a dish of frijoles?"

asked the waiter. "They are of an excellency tonight——"

"Frijoles! No!" roared the guest so explosively that the waiter jumped in alarm. "I, General Juan Manuel Lopez——"

He halted his speech abruptly. Hunger and his maddening anger at frijoles had certainly driven him to forget his caution. Here in the heart of the enemy's camp he had almost revealed his identity. The general looked around. Apparently no one had paid any attention to his indiscretion.

"A large red beefsteak, Americano style," he ordered, "and a bottle of *vino*, after which you will bring me a chicken *enchilada*."

The waiter retired, held a whispered consultation. He came back and placed a glass of water on the table. A face looked cautiously out of the kitchen, inspected the guest.

The general waited impatiently. He sniffed as he heard his steak sizzling in the kitchen. Then the kitchen door burst open and two soldiers broke in, while simultaneously two more entered the front.

General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza had fallen into the hands of his enemies!

A polite young lieutenant greeted him.

"Ah, General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza," the officer smiled, "will you be so extraordinarily kind as to accompany us? The *comandante* wishes to speak to you."

The jig was up. General Urquiza would be kind enough to accompany them. He bowed deprecatingly. Would not the lieutenant honor the general by partaking of dinner first? The lieutenant would not? Well, so be it. He marched to the *carcel*, hungry.

There would be great rejoicing the next day in Ensenada over his capture, the general realized, and he shuddered as he thought of the end. He knew the very wall against which he would be forced to stand about sunrise. He could see his body writhing on the ground, the smart young lieutenant stepping up to give him the "shot of mercy" through the head.

THE general groaned in agony, cursed himself for a fool in having betrayed his identity to the waiter. He flung himself on the *carcel* floor, a pathetic figure of a general, and bemoaned the fate that had finally landed the fox in the trap. He turned on his back and looked up at the low ceiling of his cell, thrust out a foot and pushed away a snoring, sodden Mexican, one of three who were his only companions.

Well, if he must die, he must. He closed his eyes, but a gnawing sensation in the region of his stomach grew and grew. He thought he could smell an *enchilada* cooking. It was too much. The general hopped up and let out a howl of agony.

"Food, food, food!" he roared. "I must have food, quick. I am famishing."

He stamped on the floor and yelped.

A sleepy *carcel* guard approached.

"Is the *señor* ill?" he inquired politely.

"The *señor* is hungry," replied the general. "Is it that you would starve your prisoners? I have had many prisoners in my time, but they have been well fed, *amigo*. I held it a duty to feed my captives well, even though I shot them the next morning."

"A thousand pardons," apologized the guard. "The *señor* shall be fed, and at once."

He shuffled away.

The guard returned soon with food. He opened the cell door, stepped within and tendered a bowl to his famishing prisoner. The general took the bowl and looked, fascinated, at the contents.

With a raucous whoop General Urquiza dashed bowl and contents at the guard.

"Frijoles!" he howled. "Heavens above and —— below, is there nothing in this world but frijoles?"

The bowl hit the guard on the temple and he dropped like a sack of sand. The general, astonished, rolled the guard over with his foot. He seemed to be sleeping peacefully. The general reached down, took a bunch of keys from an unresisting hand, gave the guard a kick on the head to keep him asleep longer, walked out of the cell and over to the corridor door. He unlocked the door, carefully locked it again, walked carelessly past a fat officer sitting with his feet on a desk, cap tilted over his eyes, and outside to freedom.

"Pigs," muttered the general as he breathed the blessed air of liberty, "they would feed the liberator frijoles."

The liberator paraded cockily down the street toward his trysting place with the Little Rose of the Rosebush. She was waiting, weeping.

"The Saints have performed a miracle,"

sobbed Rosita joyfully as he joined her. "I saw them take you, but I had no time to give you warning. I followed, I saw you brutally incarcerated. I felt that all was lost, but I came back here where we were to meet. You said you would return. I prepared myself to wait until my terrible uncle arrived and took me away, but you came. How, I know not, but you kept your word like a *caballero*."

"'Nor bars nor hell itself shall keep me from my tryst,'" quoted the gallant general from a long-forgotten Spanish poet, but he failed to mention that frijoles furnished the deep urge that broke his fetters.

But there was another urge urging at the general. The escape would be discovered as soon as the guard recovered from his tap on the head. He told Rosita of his assault on the guard. She grasped his hand.

"We must fly, my general, to my home," she cried in alarm.

So they flew, down the dark street, straight into the open country.

The liberator recovered his courage amazingly when he was out of immediate danger. The fates had been kind. The girl whom he was kidnapping and holding to ransom had not fled and left him when she had the chance. The ransom was still his—but oh, the hunger!

Rosita knew her way home. She led the general around the town, struck out boldly.

"It is a long, long walk, my general," she told her protector, "but two brave souls can do it, and once there we are safe."

THEY rested at intervals, but kept up a steady walk for the most of the night. At dawn they approached a tumble-down ranch house. It did not look inviting but it bespoke food.

General Urquiza was now so sure of his prey that he became slightly domineering toward the girl he was kidnapping, but he still remained polite.

"*Señorita*," said the general, "hunger is gripping me with a desperation. I have eaten nothing since day before yesterday. It would be well, my fair Rosita, if you go to the house and beg food—enough for two."

"They would not give it to me," replied Rosita. "I know them. It is the home of Angel Montoya, *El Diablillo*."

"Angel Montoya, the Little Devil, would not exist long in this world if he refused me food and I possessed but a gun," swore the bandit chief fiercely. "He would soon join his namesake below."

"We shall resort to strategy," declared the girl. "I shall run in upon them, cry that the great general Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza is coming with his troop. They will fly. We shall enter and your poor stomach shall again taste of food. Oh, general, but look again to see if the *carcel* guard did not leave you the gold coin."

"He did not," said the general, cursing fiercely. "The scullion searched me thoroughly, even my shoes, and I saw him drop the coin in his pocket."

The general didn't think a whole lot of Rosita's strategy, but as both were penniless it was better than anything else he could conceive on the spur of the moment. Despite his pessimism it worked charmingly.

Rosita stormed into the house as the mean Señor Montoya and his pathetic family sat down to their poor breakfast.

"Fly!" she cried dramatically. "The ferocious General Urquiza is coming. He is close at hand. Fly for your lives. He will butcher you all."

Señora Montoya gathered her dusky brood and flew. Señor Montoya waited long enough to retrieve a small sack of coin from beneath the poor bed on the floor, grab his trusty rifle, and he, too, flew.

Rosita waited until they were out of sight, then she went outside and waved a handkerchief. General Urquiza plodded up to the house.

"Breakfast is waiting," Rosita greeted him cheerfully, "waiting and on the table."

She escorted her general inside the house and pulled out a chair for him.

Ranged round the mean table were six bowls of frijoles.

General Urquiza let out a long and complicated Spanish oath, but he sat down and without another word dived into the frijoles. He ate four of the dishes, the girl two. His first hunger appeased, he searched the house and found two sacks of frijoles, but nothing else. The family of Montoya was far down the scale of living.

The general morosely went outside and chased a tough-looking rooster of uncertain age around the house, but failed to gain on it. However, by this time the frijoles had begun to invigorate him somewhat in mind and body, despite his deadly antipathy to them, and he went back into the house foreseeing better times ahead. He still had the girl in his clutches and they were approaching her home where he would put into execution his perfectly feasible scheme of holding her captive till he was paid a handsome ransom.

As a starving man in the desert sees great banquets, he visioned the big red steaks, the luscious *enchiladas* that he would buy when once he had money in his pockets. He tried to decide which he would order first, came to the conclusion that his ordering in the Ensenada café had been a mistake. He should have ordered *enchilada* first, the steak to follow. Steaks were excellent, of course, but they did not have the enveloping flavor of an *enchilada*. He decided definitely upon the *enchilada*—when the ransom was collected.

Rosita, weary from her tramp, announced that she intended to occupy the Montoya family pallet for a nap and her protector went outside again.

He walked around the house in hopes of getting another try at the rooster, and waddled smack into Señor Montoya pointing a large rifle at his bosom.

The general's hands went up.

"Do not shoot," he begged. "I shall explain all."

Rosita, not yet asleep, heard and saw the capture, and the general beheld with chagrin his ransom go sky-rocketing out of the back door and make for the hills.

Señor Montoya, after the rude interruption of his breakfast, had covered considerable ground before he stopped to look back. He had then secreted himself in some thick brush above an arroyo which would afford a quick way of retreat, and had remained to watch the bandit troop come up.

When he saw a lone, fat and sore-footed Mexican tramp painfully up to the house, rage filled Señor Montoya's heart that he had been bluffed out so ignominiously, and he had returned in a roundabout way. He was sneaking up on the house with the intention of recapturing his domicile from the base invader when the invader had walked into his arms.

The Señorita Rosita de Rosal had been absolutely correct about the meanness of Señor Angel Montoya, *El Diablillo*. He promptly collared General Urquiza, and alternately poking him viciously with the sharp barrel of his gun and kicking him with the one shoe he wore, scooted the general around the house and into the bare kitchen. He made the now weeping bandit tie his own feet with a piece of bedding, then bound his hands behind his back and pulled a burlap sack down over his head. He then searched carefully through his captive's pockets, cursed heartily at his failure to find anything of value, slammed his helpless prisoner roughly to the floor and went out to call his brood.

Rosita, from a point of vantage in the brush, watched the proceedings with rage and despair. He was her very own general, if she could only get him home. She had risked much for him and she did not propose that a mean man like her neighbor, Señor Montoya, should take him away from her. She had been planning a better fate for her protector. A general in the family would add much to its prestige. Her father's wealth and influence would soon obtain for the general a decree of amnesty, and there he was, at a moment's notice, experienced and ready to jump into any political fray that arose. He might even, with a fair turn of fortune, become a governor of Lower California. Such things had happened, and the general's name was not unknown.

Rosita looked on while the mean Señor Montoya gathered up his family from the brush and excitedly herded the group into the house to see his great capture; then with heroic determination to risk all on her woman's wit she emerged from her hiding-place and boldly entered the house.

Señor Montoya promptly presented his rifle.

"Deceiver of the helpless," hissed Señor Montoya, "where is the army that this fat General Urquiza, the coward, was to bring up? Ha! Ha! There is no army."

"I am Rosita de Rosal," proudly declared the girl. "My father and my brothers will swoop down upon you and trample you and your miserable hovel into the dust."

Señor Angel Montoya was a little abashed. He knew the de Rosals. They were a proud and haughty breed, albeit only ranchers, and where their women-folk were concerned they were decidedly dangerous.

"I have no quarrel with you, *señorita*," said Señor Montoya sullenly. "I honor your father and your brothers as brave men."

"Señor Montoya," appealed the girl, unbending somewhat, "we played a ruse upon you, I admit, but it was for a purpose.

The general is on his way to my father's hacienda where he will recruit an army. There are mutterings in the east. All is not going well at Mexico City. He has been called to a conference and was going in disguise. He will be at the head of a great force. Come, your fortune beckons. Join him, us. Even if he decides not to raise this great army, my father can give you work that is better than this poor place——"

"You are a colonel instantly," roared the general through the sack encompassing his head.

Colonel Angel Montoya quickly removed the sack from his general's head.

"A thousand pardons, *señor el general,*" he stammered. "I did not—really—catch the name when the *señorita* came in so hurriedly. She spoke of bandits. It was but natural that I should be confused."

The colonel quickly cut the general's bonds, grasped his trusty and rusty rifle and saluted.

"I served with the great General Leyva in the campaign of Mexicali," he said humbly.

"I am, indeed, happy to hear it, colonel," responded General Urquiza cordially. "Then you were present when General Leyva and I made our famous juncture before Ensenada. But for the fact that the gunboat *Guerrero* dismounted her cannon and used them on the defenses we should have stormed the town."

"I was there. I was there, *señor el general,*" declared Colonel Montoya happily.

"We shall take up the march after a brief rest," ordered General Urquiza.

This idea was highly agreeable. They flopped themselves down to sleep, even the Montoya family that had but recently risen.

THE sun was sliding toward the west when the party began yawning. Colonel Montoya went out and returned with two dejected burros. Señora Montoya stirred up a pot of frijoles on the stove and served them lukewarm.

General Urquiza twisted his mustachios as the beans came round. He must keep up his strength. He eyed the burros speculatively. He had once eaten burro-steaks and they were pretty fair—infinitely better than frijoles as a steady diet. At the same time, the burros would save him many a weary step yet to be taken before the Rancho de Rosal was reached. He decided against burro-steak and partook somewhat daintily of frijoles, with the mental reservation that never in this life would he taste of frijoles again.

The general finished his last mouthful of beans with a gag and gave the order to march. The fair Rosita was mounted on one burro, the general on another. Colonel Montoya with his trusty rifle marched on foot, while behind him straggled Señora Colonel Angel Montoya and the smaller Montoyas, carrying as many frijoles as each could pack.

Rosita pointed out a short cut to her father's hacienda and they lurched along stolidly, the girl busy with her thoughts, her protector with his. The general was rehearsing to himself his approach to Colonel Montoya to intimate to his follower his plan to seize and hold to ransom the fair and plump Rosita. The colonel, being already a mean man, could play a fine part in this little drama, and when General Urquiza had the money he could neatly duck and leave the colonel to face the music.

The night hours dragged along. The party rested, allowed the children to sleep, napped themselves, resumed the march.

Rosita edged her burro over toward the general.

"My general," she purred, "we are approaching my home. What plan have you in mind?"

"Deliver you to your honored father," replied the general cunningly. It was yet too early to spring his trap.

"And you?"

"I shall fare forth to seek my fortunes again. Reach Sonora, attempt to recruit, reorganize my army and sweep through the country."

"None of my family has ever been a soldier," said Rosita, with a soft sigh. "How gladly they would welcome a true soldier into the family."

The heart of the brave General Urquiza turned a flip-flop. He remembered how Rosita had pleaded with Colonel Montoya for his liberty. Could it be possible that the fair Rosita harbored thoughts of tenderness toward him? Life on the hacienda with the damsel he was kidnaping would be a soft, sweet song compared to generaling. He pictured himself in that setting, and a boldness came into his manner.

The dawn was coming. They topped a

hill and looked down on the fat and smiling hacienda sleeping in the valley.

"Rosita," said the general huskily, "my fair one, my little Rosebud, there is your home. See, I have brought you safely through many perils back to your people. I now offer you my heart, my hand and my sword. Refuse and I shall carry you off into the wilds."

Rosita drew herself up on her burro.

"General Urquiza, your words surprize me very much," she replied haughtily. "I am unworthy your attention. I am flattered. But you must see my father, obtain from him permission to seek my hand."

General Urquiza looked over the hacienda with a speculative eye. It was very desirable. The girl herself was desirable, a typical Spanish beauty. The tiny, budding mustache at each corner of her red lips bespoke hidalgo blood in her veins. But he could not stake all on her father's consent. If her father refused, ah——! He would be extremely out of luck. No wife, no ransom, no army.

"Impossible," sighed the general. "Your father might not look with favor upon me. If he should refuse——"

"If he should refuse," interrupted Rosita, "why, my general, he would think the —— himself were chasing him over the rancho. The hacienda came to me from my mother's family. It is mine."

"Ah, my Rosita," whispered the general hoarsely, "let us fly to your noble father, beg his consent."

He kicked his burro with a hearty heel that made the drooping animal jump.

The rancho was awakening as the party came up, the two burros ahead, Colonel Montoya and his faithful brood trailing far in the rear. Rosita asked quick questions of the Mexicans stirring lazily about. No, her father and brothers had not returned. Yes, the cook was about, the fire was made.

Rosita pushed General Urquiza into a cool dining-room, table set. The de Rosals lived in style. She seated him at the table, poured him a generous drink of wine.

"My brave, beloved general!" she cried. "My famished general! With my own hands I shall prepare you a breakfast such as you have never eaten. It shall be a feast. But sip your *vino* and nibble on this cheese, and I shall hasten."

General Urquiza gallantly kissed the fair hands that would prepare him this breakfast. Rosita, blushing, ran to the kitchen.

The general reflectively sipped the heartening wine and gazed out the open window close at hand. He could see Colonel Montoya trudging up the road, his wife with a handkerchief over her head close behind, his children straggling along.

A disturbing odor was wafted in from the kitchen. The general sniffed uneasily. It was the aroma of cooking frijoles or his trusty nose betrayed him. Frijoles and plenty of them. The general shifted nervously in his chair, tasted of his wine to drown the disturbing odor.

Rosita, her face beaming and red from her exertions at the stove, pushed open the door and came in, a steaming, covered dish in her hands; and with her came pouring in a greater volume of the hated odor of frijoles.

"But taste of that, my general, and all of your hard labors and adventures will be forgotten," she cried, and flew back to her kitchen.

The general sat like a fat, pudgy statue before the steaming, covered dish, bitter disgust on his face.

"Frijoles," he muttered. "Frijoles for breakfast—again."

He thought of the fair Rosita, he thought of the fine hacienda, he thought of the frijoles and his gorge rose. In a rage he dashed for the window to leap out and away. He reached the window, placed his hand on the sill, was ready to jump when another thought stopped him. He would first take the hated frijoles and smash them over the table as a mark of his great rage and his renounced love of Rosita.

The general dashed back to the table, grasped the covered dish, raised it high.

"Beloved," called Rosita from beyond the door, "was it not an *enchilada* of an excellency?"

General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza softly set down the dish, jerked off the cover and stuffed huge chunks of the delicious *enchilada* into his capacious mouth.

"Beloved," he mumbled, "it is an *enchilada* of a very great excellency."

# RIFLE RULE *Conclusion*

## by HUGH PENDEXTER

*Author of "The Long Knives," "Old Misery," etc.*

***The first part of the story briefly retold in story form***

IN 1856 when Kansas was torn between the pro- and anti-slavery men, Hale Watt, a young Southerner slipped quietly ashore from the river-boat *Pole Star* and with his horse continued his journey by unfrequented roads.

Toward nightfall his horse went lame and in searching for a place to buy another, he stumbled on a house filled with men, whom Watt at once identified as Border Ruffians—thieves and murderers who terrorized the country in the name of Law and Order.

Pretending not to notice their interest in his satchel filled with gold, Watt prepared for bed in an upper room. During the night he narrowly escaped death, and fled with a fresh horse leaving a dead man behind him. From then on the Southerner realized that "Crow" Agger and his gang would be on his trail.

Next day he took the steamer again and there met "Prairie" Palmer and Enoch Fair, a young Northerner, who, sadly bewildered by the hostile crowd, was being harried by a "Regulator."

With some difficulty Fair was rescued and a friendship sprang up between the Northerner and Southerner. Fair wanted to take up farm-land and with some reluctance Watt agreed to join him. The young Southerner evidently feared something but his new friend was unwilling to question him.

Prairie Palmer left them on good land and pushed on to the West. Already this part of Kansas was getting too crowded for him.

One day at the nearest store Fair was held up by some of Agger's men who insisted he was riding a stolen horse. The fiery old store-keeper, who did not want his trade ruined, put the men to rout, and Fair rode back to Watt who pointed out more trouble. In a rough square made of four timbers on the land they thought was theirs, was a notice:

"This is Bud Peoples' claim, he'll shoot anny man what comes in a mile of it."

SOON after, a man appeared who claimed the land. After some reluctance he admitted that his name was Pelks. Fair showed him the notice, and when he still showed fight drove him off with an ax. The man left swearing vengeance.

"I'm afraid Pelks will come back with a gang," said Fair.

Next day the comrades started out to visit their neighbors, whom they found friendly, but apprehensive about a mysterious cabin farther on. Curious, the men decided to visit the place themselves. There they found an Indian woman who was very unfriendly. When they left Watt told his friend that he had discovered a hole in the rock against which the cabin was built, and masked by a false door. Both men suspected evil doings.

Soon after, they found a notice pinned to their own door warning them to leave in forty-eight hours, and signed "Cap. Hemp." Both men decided that Hemp and the man who lived in the mysterious cabin was the same person, and that he was connected with Pelks.

"We're in for a siege," said Watt. "Tonight we'll stand guard."

When the attack came the men were ready for it. The baffled howls of the mob outside told them that their bullets were taking effect. In the leader's voice Watt recognized Crow Agger, and knew the owner of the other cabin. They routed the attackers and, following their advantage soon after burned the mysterious cabin. Here they discovered a press for the making of counterfeit money, and destroyed it. Surprised by the gang, they fled, leaving Agger dead. Fair had been hurt in the blazing cabin and with difficulty Watt got him to the horses. The gang had been broken forever. Agger would no longer terrorize the country.

FAIR'S arm, which had been hurt, grew more painful and they decided to seek a doctor at Topeka. The town was crowded with settlers and one, Reuben Morse, urged the young men to join his wagon-train. But they decided not to. Soon after their return to the cabin, they were visited by Sheriff Jones who informed Fair that he was under arrest for having a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in his possession!

"Rifle Rule," copyright, 1924, by Hugh Pendexter.

The charge was absurd and they suspected the Indian woman from the mysterious cabin as being responsible, but there was no help for it and they were forced to ride to Lecompton with the sheriff.

Through Watt's influence Fair was admitted to bail and was freed. The men returned to their holding and at the store met the Indian woman who cursed them and predicted that in seven days Fair would be dead. Unwilling to believe such superstition yet uneasy, they returned to their cabin.

They decided to take turns guarding as they feared the woman might lead her Cherokee killers against them. Toward evening a horseman arrived with a message from a friend in Lecompton warning Fair that a man was in town looking for Watt. Fair was unwilling to tell the reason, but decided that they must move on.

Before they had gone far they discovered that they were being trailed by the Knife Thrower and four other Indians. During the desperate pursuit Watt's horse went lame and they took refuge in a roofless cabin. They managed to escape in the darkness although Watt was hurt. Taking refuge in another cabin Fair went for water. When Watt opened his eyes he looked up into the face of a strange man.

IT WAS the Knife Thrower.

"Tell me where your friend is," he demanded holding a knife ready in his hand.

Instead of answering, Watt shouted loudly for Fair to keep away. At that moment the half-breed uttered a cry and crumpled to the floor, killed from behind by Fair's ax.

The fugitives found horses and fled on to Fort Riley. Here, after a fight with the driver of a wagon-train, who, admiring their pluck, wished them to become members of his escort, they left hurriedly. The sheriff from Missouri was on Watt's trail again. They were to meet farther on in strange circumstances.

In a desolate stretch of country they saw a man riding desperately toward them, pursued by a band of Indians. The white men drove them off with their rifles and then found that the man they had rescued was Sheriff Doble. They decided to forget their own quarrel until they were out of this dangerous country.

They had not gone far before they were half surrounded by another band of Indians. After a running fight the three men took refuge in a grove where they were joined by Prairie Palmer, the plainsman.

"Don't offer any fight," he cried as he dropped from his spent horse. "I'll try to convince them we are friends."

Instantly the Indians surrounded them and had them quickly disarmed. In spite of Palmer's protests they waited for instructions from the medicine-man concerning the fate of the prisoners.

THE Thunder beings were cruel and destructive, yet they created the wild rice and the prairie-grasses and gave instruments of war and paints to the Dakotas. There was an endless war between them and the Unktehi, the gods in the water and under the earth. Among the allies of the latter were snakes, frogs, owls, eagles and ghosts. The Unktehi were malevolent toward the human race at times, and yet they made the earth and peopled it with red men. It was the Unktehi who gave the first mystery sacks to the Dakotas. And as the feud between the two supernatural families is endless, and as neither can escape the *wakan* power of the other, the Dakotas worshipped both. Now before their very eyes, the warriors believed, one of the countless duels was to be fought. And more than one warrior secretly trembled. Through the medicine-man the Thunderers had hurled a challenge to the Unktehi in declaring their intention to slay a snake, an ally of the terrestial gods.

The spectators' interest reached a climax when Bone Arrow gave a sharp cry and snatched off his robe and struck at something on the ground. There responded an ominous rattle; and Palmer was on his feet, shouting:

"Ancient Rattlesnake, he dare not kill you by hitting you. He knows, if he kills you by striking, he will become a snake-dreamer and you will crawl into his nose, or ears, or mouth. And he will surely die. You are the child of the Unktehi, Grandfather. Do not be afraid."

But Bone Arrow did not intend to invite destruction by violating this well-known law, and holding his robe before him he attempted to drive the serpent toward the fire, where he could brush it on to a fire and exterminate it, and thereby satisfy the Oglala that the Thunderers were all powerful for the time being; and that the death of the snake was the sign for the immediate destruction of the prisoners.

Palmer knew the duel of the gods must be fought between him and Bone Arrow. He stalked forward, and none offered to stop him for he was on the Unktehi's business. As he passed between the fires he kept calling:

"Grandfather, he can not hurt you. He will surely dream of you and die. Arikara, stand back while I speak to this one of the Unktehi, who made the land and man."

They Fear Even His Horses approached the two men, followed by all except those delegated to guard the three whites. The chief had no desire to interfere with the plainsman so long as he was participating in the drama between the sky-dwellers and the earth and water beings. The white man had offered himself as a champion for the Unktehi, just as the medicine-man was the human representative of the Wakinyan. Neither power could win an encounter except as it took the other by surprize; and the strife between the two forces would never end. The red-men would not take sides, but would do homage to both terrible agencies with great impartiality.

When a man became *heyoka* he had received the supreme honor from the Wakinyan. But let him look closely to his steps, for his path was perilous. The law of compensation worked with great exactness. Let the mortal elevated to companionship with the Wakinyan break the promises exacted of him and he died during a thunder-storm. There had been a *heyoka* man among the Oglala, who must have neglected his pledges, for he had predicted his own death and was struck by lightning while riding his pony and pointing the stem of his medicine-pipe toward the angry clouds. Women, too, who were *heyoka*, had been destroyed by lightning. In the Black Hills many such celestial executions took place.

Bone Arrow resented the intrusion of the white man and waved his blanket again. But the snake would not uncoil and make toward the fire. Palmer came up boldly and the medicine-man shifted his tactics. He had planned that Palmer and his friends should be skinned alive, but did he die from the bite of the serpent there would be three left for the knives, while the failure of the Unktehi to aid their champion would add immeasurably to the influence of Wakinyan's favorite red son.

Bone Arrow stepped back and threw his robe over his head and shoulders, and remembered to chatter his teeth and shiver, and jeered:

"The Unktehi will surely keep the white man from being killed. Grandfather knows you are his friend. A man does not fear his friends. Go up to him. Put your face down so he sees you, for his eyes are weak."

Palmer accepted the taunting challenge by crouching before the snake and talking to him in a low voice—Watt, Fair, and Doble, watching with bulging eyes, beheld a curious and startling performance. As Palmer talked the vicious head gradually ceased swaying from side to side, and the evilly beautiful coils seemed to be relaxing. Then the snake started to glide away and Palmer reached forward and picked him up.

"They can not hurt you, Grandfather," he repeated in a monotonous singsong. "You are the child of the Unktehi. I am your friend."

With much deliberation he rose to his feet and with slow steps came back to the fires, the snake coiled around his left arm and the head extended to one side. Palmer's friends, fascinated while being horrified, saw him gently stroke the diamond pattern of the reptile's back; and always was he talking, sometimes with his gaze fixed on the malevolent face of Bone Arrow, showing through the folds of his robe, sometimes with his head lowered close to the head of the snake. The Oglala rapidly gave ground before Palmer's approach; and had he elected to turn and walk away in the darkness there was none who would have stayed his going. They Fear Even His Horses clapped his hand to his mouth, as did his warriors, to express his amazement.

Here had been fought a tragic battle with an entire absence of uproar or confusion; and yet it marked the defeat of the Thunderbirds. How could the Oglala inflict punishment upon one who had stood forth as the victorious champion of the earth and water forces. Among their racial brothers, the Assiniboins, the Thunderers ranked next to the sun, but the Oglala would remain neutral. Certainly they could not take a stand against a power that appeared to be in the ascendancy.

To the gaping warriors Palmer said: "Ho! Ho! You see the child of the Unktehi resting quietly in my hands and arms. Do any of my red brothers wish to hold him?"

And moving his arms slowly and gently he extended the snake for one of them to take. The offer was refused, the Indians crowding farther away.

Palmer laughed softly and continued:

"Where is the power of the Wakinyan? Or has the *heyoka* man broken some promise and can be helped no longer by them? Did he speak with a straight tongue when he said his spirit had been to their lodge this night? See. I let my Grandfather go. He will crawl away. No one shall harm him. This grove is *Taku wakan tipi*, for here lives *Sintelila tanka*, the Ancient of Rattlesnakes."

And once more he found a wide passage waiting for him as he strode to the west of the circle to deposit the serpent gently on the ground. Then he stood to one side that all might see the reptile slowly glide away. The snake moved a few feet and then stopped, as if loath to leave his rescuer. This in itself was strong medicine. Speaking rapidly that none of the Indians might catch his English he explained to his astounded friends:

"Always could handle any critter I wanted to without getting hurt. Bumblebees never sting me. Dogs don't bite me. Snakes never seem to mind it if I handle them. I must have *wakan* hands. Their medicine-man has been planning to cut us up in the Dakota way, but I reckon I've spoiled his game for a while."

Turning dramatically to the Oglala he pointed a finger at Bone Arrow and cried:

"There stands the man with the crooked tongue! He told you the Thunderers promised he should scotch a snake and kill it by fire. You have seen."

They Fear Even His Horses, greatly disturbed, uneasily admitted:

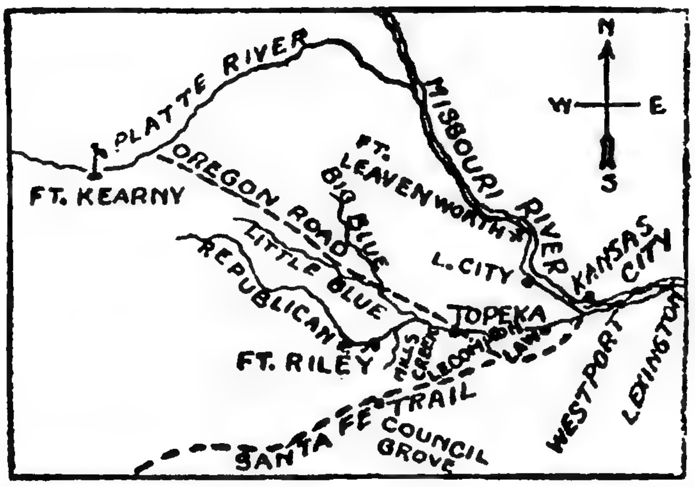
"The white man has a medicine. It is a strong medicine."

"Come, now; tell us. Is Bone Arrow's medicine strong this night?" demanded Palmer, determined to extract every advantage from the situation.

Bone Arrow foresaw himself as a man who has lost his medicine. He forgot his *heyoka* rôle, which called for sounds of merriment to express anger, and screamed in rage. Before any one could guess his purpose he had picked up a flat war-club and dashed between the fires and toward the snake. The reptile, as if knowing his danger, started to glide away, but the medicine-man struck with the sharp edge of the club and severed the snake's head. A gasp of dismay burst from the onlookers. The body of the snake writhed and twisted convulsively and sent a coil around the club. With a hoarse shout Bone Arrow hurled club and snake into the nearest fire, and triumphantly shouted:

"The voice of Wakinyan can not lie. It said a snake was to be scotched. And it is so."

But the spectators turned their heads away to escape witnessing the cremation of the snake. It was bad to kill a snake with a blow. The Thunderers dwelt high in the sky, but the Unktehi were very close; for was not this grove the home of the Grandfather of snakes? They Fear Even His Horses gave a little shiver. He knew the place was taboo from now on, so long as the memory of man ran, and so long as fire and water should wage their endless battle. In a voice heavy with fear the chief gave orders for an immediate removal to another camping ground.



Bone Arrow saw he was being eyed askance; and to offset the sudden prejudice he picked up his medicine-lance with its long steel head, and leaped on his pony and called attention to the lightning streaks. Then he shook the lance so the head would reflect the light from the fires, while with his left hand he appeared to be plucking glass beads from the air. The beads he juggled with one hand, keeping them dancing up and down with consummate skill and ending the skilful performance by pretending to catch them in his mouth and swallow them as they fell.

But the tragedy of the scene just enacted was too overwhelming to be erased by any piece of jugglery, or sleight-of-hand. And there were some in the band who did not look on the *heyoka* man with the respectful gaze of the chief; but there was none who did not believe that Bone Arrow had made a fatal mistake in killing the snake. Nor did any propose to figure in the calamity that might overtake him. Had he worked the snake close to the fire and had then brushed him on to the coals the victory would have been his and the Thunderers. But he had failed, therefore his august patrons had failed, when the white man went to the rescue of the Unktehi's child.

Bone Arrow was making a desperate fight to recover his popularity. He hugged his robe about him and pretended to be suffering the cold, although the sweat glistened on his face. He waved his lance and proclaimed his greatness. Ignoring him the warrior threw the prisoners on to their horses and passed cords of rawhide from foot to foot under the belly of each mount. The red men's desire to leave the tabooed grove was unanimous; not even Bone Arrow daring to remain. Yet the medicine-man fought bravely to recover his prestige; and as he rode his pony from the fires and took the lead he threw back his head and sang the song of a Thunderbird dreamer:

"Friends, behold sacred I have been.
Friends, behold in a sacred manner I have been influenced
At the gathering of the clouds."

As if in answer to his song there came from out the north a dull rumbling, that seemed to traverse the earth's crust in vibrations. It was the voice of the Thunderbirds as they rallied for battle and discharged their arrows at some water or earth god of the Unktehi. Bone Arrow yelled in a frenzy of excited joy. His superhuman allies were rushing through the southern door of their lodge, where stood the beaver on guard, to help him. But none of the others welcomed the coming of the storm.

With a shout for haste They Fear Even His Horses caught up with the medicine-man, and at a smashing gallop the two led the way for several miles down the river. By the time they had selected a new camp and had dismounted in the timber streams of fire were crossing the sky as the angry Thunderers opened their terrible eyes. Fires were hurriedly lighted. Brave hunting for celestial gods, but a poor time for humble men.

"Storm's coming fast. Dangerous among these trees," Fair muttered to Palmer as now they found themselves together again.

"You'll never be closer to death without dying than you were back in that other patch of woods," wearily replied the plainsman. "Lucky that red —— killed the snake. The Injuns are scared of him and his medicine, but just now he is losing ground. Already he's scheming to turn some new trick so's to build himself up again. He's got to make them believe the Thunderers killed the rattler through him."

Doble groaned and remarked:

"Things are happening too fast. Wish they'd let up a bit. Will they hurt us?"

Palmer turned his head, that the sheriff might not see the look of pity in his face, and stoutly replied:

"Oh, we'll be all right if you keep your nerve. I've seen a sicker hoss than this live." Then to himself, "But —— few!"

"I'm taking it as a good sign that they didn't kill us off-hand," spoke up Watt.

"Best talk you ever made," heartily declared Palmer. "S'pose you all try to laugh as if I'd said something comical."

And he lifted his own voice in a loud guffaw. Watt promptly imitated him and Fair managed to simulate mirth; but the sheriff made no effort, believing it would be worse than useless to try. The Indians standing guard over them glared suspiciously, then glanced at one another. Obviously the white men were very confident of protection even though prisoners and with the Thunderers out on a red path.

The plainsman noted the effect and was well-pleased and urged his companions to continue the play. Bone Arrow, attracted by the unwonted sound of laughter and fearing some white man's trickery, pushed his way through the guards.

"The white men laugh?" he queried.

"We must be *heyoka*," replied Palmer. "We must be laughing to show we feel sad."

And he indulged in further humor and was joined by Watt and Fair. The red man has his sense of humor, and the guards knew the white men were making game of the Thunderbird dreamer. It gave them more respect for the prisoners. Yet the honors remained with Bone Arrow, who pointed to the haggard face of the sheriff and remarked:

"This white man is *heyoka*, too. He must feel very happy."

"—— him! He counted coup," muttered Palmer.

With another malignant glance the medicine-man turned back to prepare for some coup. The storm, following down the river, was rumbling terrifically, and the battle between the gods must have been most stubborn, for there was an almost continuous lighting up of the heavens as the Thunderers called on each other for help when finding themselves in danger from the *tonwan*, or magic power of the Unktehi. Bone Arrow believed the night would make or ruin him; and he was much disturbed. He was a Thunderbird dreamer, but deep in his heart was the fear of those who associate too intimately with eccentric gods.

The new fires were heaped higher with fuel, so that there might be some live coals left after the rain. The men hurriedly stretched their blankets and robes among the trees to afford them a partial shelter from the oncoming tempest. No thought for the white men's comfort was taken, of course. They were lashed to trunks of trees and a shelter for their guards prepared close by. But what pleased Palmer and helped to make the storm of little account was the general avoidance of the *heyoka* man. He called his companions' attention to it.

Bone Arrow noticed it, also, but pretended not to; and with his robe drawn over his head he fell to scheming as to how he could encompass the destruction of the white men before sunrise. Especially did he desire the death of Palmer, whom he blamed for the averted glances and the quiet withdrawal did he join any of the busy groups.

Considerable excitement was created by the return of a young warrior who had gone to recover a runaway pony. He came on the gallop and yelling that a horseman was coming down the river-path. It was too late to mask the fires but the chief sent a dozen of his young men through the grove to ambush the newcomer before he could come in sight of the fires and take alarm.

"If it's a white man we oughter howl for him to keep clear." Doble whispered to Palmer.

"Too much thunder for him to hear. They'll get him some distance up-stream. He'll have to trust to his medicine."

"Why do they want to kill us? We ain't done them no harm," bitterly complained the sheriff.

"Injun nature to kill all white men," growled Watt.

"That wa'n't so in the old days," corrected Palmer. "Four years ago everything was sweet and serene along the Platte, but the Government made a mistake in putting officers into the Injun country who didn't have any plains experience. And the number of soldiers was small. Major Hoffman of the Sixth Infantry in Fifty-two warned against sending greenhorns out here to handle the red critters. He wasn't listened to. Dakotas, Rapahoes and Cheyennes, were camped around Bordeaux's trading-post nine miles east of Fort Laramie. Everything was lovely then. Some killings of stray whites now and then, but they wasn't tribe work; just personal affairs. And whites were wiping out a redskin now and then. You can't work in the raw without fetching some blood. In Fifty-three a Minneconjou Dakota wandered down from the Missouri to the Injuns' villages near Laramie, and seeing a soldier in a boat took a shot at him and ran away.

"None of the Injuns in the villages was to blame, but a lieutenant and some men was sent across the river to get the Minneconjou, or hostages for his being brought in. The Injuns was friendly enough, but they was scared when they saw the soldiers piling into their villages. They ran away and the soldiers killed three of 'em. Still they didn't pass the war-pipe. Some of the chiefs went to the fort and complained that the soldiers were sent into the country to see the Fort Laramie treaty of Fifty-one was kept, and then were the first to spill blood. But they didn't want a fight, and they let it go at that. Still they felt mighty bad about it.

"Now we come to the story of the most expensive cow in America. Two years ago the critter was left behind, as worthless, by a Mormon emigrant train. A Dakota came across the animal and killed it. Mormon learned about it and went to the fort and raised a hullabaloo. A Brule chief went to the fort and offered ten dollars for the cow, which wa'n't worth ten cents. He done that, although he knew a Minneconjou killed the critter, not a Brule. The Mormon smelled a rich trade. Said he must have twenty-five dollars. Chief refused. Lieutenant Grattan, who knew nothing about Injuns, but who was keen to get after them, was sent into the Indian villages with some thirty soldiers and two howitzers. One of the chiefs offered a good mule for the Mormon to call it quits. They Fear Even His Horses, that feller over there who's trying to decide whether to kill us now or later, was there with his Oglalas. He tried to smooth it out.

"Fellers watching the fuss from Bordeaux's trading-post say they saw the lieutenant walk back to his men. Then the soldiers brought down their guns and some one fired a shot. Soldiers ripped in a volley. The Brule chief fell, hit three times. Inside of no time the Injuns were peppering the soldiers with bullets and arrers, mostly arrers; and every white man was killed.

Then the Injuns ran away. That was the first cost of the cow.

"Last year General Harney was sent out to punish the Injuns for the Grattan affair and found some of the Brules camping in Ash Hollow north of the North Platte. Injuns ran away, the cavalry gave chase, and between eighty and ninety Injuns were killed and nearly as many women and children captured. Harney went back to Laramie and sent word for Grattan's murderers to be brought in. Five Injuns came in singing their death-songs and were sent to Leavenworth. The second cost of the cow brought the total up to about one hundred and twenty white and red men killed.

"Then last March the Dakotas met Harney at Fort Pierre and agreed to give up the feller who had killed the cow. The Cheyennes wouldn't knuckle under and kept away. An expedition was to go after them this Spring, but the trouble in Kansas called for soldiers, and now you can't make the Injuns believe that the whites ain't scared out of their boots. The Cheyennes, Kiowas and other plains tribes are striking hands with the Dakotas, smoking war-tobacco, and next year there'll be mighty poor trading out here."

"I can see how they must feel real friendly toward us," muttered Fair.

From far up the river, between the peals of thunder, came the faint sound of howling and shouting; and the prisoners groaned as they pictured the arrival of another prisoner. The effect on Bone Arrow was pronounced. He sprang to his feet and cocked his ear to catch the cries of triumph, forgetting to plug his ears as a *heyoka* man should do, but quick to seize upon any happening and turn it to serve his own purpose.

"The Thunderers smile on us tonight," he shouted to the camp. "They make the name of They Fear Even His Horses sound very loud from the Kansas to the upper waters of the Missouri. They tell each other he is a very great chief."

He ceased his harangue only as the shouting and rejoicing came down the river path. Then a mounted man dashed into the firelight and pulled his pony back on his haunches and with an ululating cry held a lance above his head, from the foreshaft of which dangled a human hand and a scalp of black air.

With the eagerness of timber-wolves smelling blood the Oglalas crowded about him, their eyes glittering. They Fear Even His Horses was more sedate of bearing, and greeted:

"You are not of the Oglala. You are of the Hunkpapa."

"They say he shall have a new name when Running Antelope of the Hunkpapa band hears how he made this coup."

And again he shook the lance.

"The Hunkpapa is a very brave young man. He brings a talk about his coup?"

"The dead man was a Pawnee from the Great Island village. I caught him one sleep from here. His pony had run away. I caught him while he was trying to catch the pony. My pony shall have a coup mark for the help he gave me. I rode by his side and struck him with my bow."

He paused for his hearers to express their approval with many grunts; for to strike an enemy with a bow was one of the greatest insults a warrior could offer.

"Then I killed him with my lance. Now I will go back to Running Antelope's band and ask to be made a Crow-owner, and this lance shall be a Crow-lance and I shall carry the crow in going on a war-path. The Pawnees are women. They make friends with the whites so they may get new blankets.'

And he pulled from under him a blanket and tossed it to the ground.

Palmer suppressed a groan. They Fear Even His Horses said:

"The young man is very brave. He has the right to count one coup when the leaders of his band meet in council. He will make a very brave Crow-owner."

Then he stepped forward, centered his attention on the blanket, and Palmer bit his lips and waited.

It was a new blanket. The chief smoothed it out on the ground and stared at it intently for a few moments. Then he said to them—

"Let the men who have been among the Kiowas step forward."

Several of the older warriors advanced. Pointing to the blanket the chief asked—

"Where have you seen striped blankets like that?"

One of the warriors promptly replied—

"The Kiowas bring back from Mexico blankets like this one when they return from a raid with ponies and women."

Another said:

"I have seen one like this. A Comanche brought it back from Mexico."

"It is good," said the chief. "This blanket was made by the Spaniards. Some were brought to the Yanktonai two snows ago."*

Then wheeling about and bending over Palmer he hissed—

"The white man's trade was in blankets of Mexico!"

"They Fear Even His Horses always speaks with a straight tongue," was the composed reply.

"This blanket, found on the Pawnee, came from your trade-blankets," accused the chief.

"Then the Pawnee went to the fort and stole it."

"My medicine tells me the white man lies. He left his trade at the Pawnee village; and not at the fort for the Oglala," cried Bone Arrow.

And as if to confirm the truth of his statement the thunder boomed over the grove.

"There is a dog making a noise. I can not hear to talk," complained Palmer without glancing toward the medicine-man.

After a slight pause Palmer quietly resumed, "If it is one of my trade-blankets the Pawnee stole it. I can not see the blanket good. All Mexican blankets look alike. The Oglala men and their chief have said those they saw were like this. Because this is so a trader marks his goods. If there is an arrow, very small and marked in red, in one corner, then the blanket is from those I brought for the Oglala trade and left at the fort until I could find my Oglala brothers."

The chief snatched up the blanket and turned it over and examined it thoroughly.

"There is no arrow in red," he announced.

"Then it is not one of my blankets," Palmer calmly told him.

"The blanket is new. The fort has given out no new blankets. The white man speaks with a crooked tongue," insisted the medicine-man.

"There are many Mexican blankets. There are many traders," Palmer replied.

"He traded with the Pawnees and left their robes at the fort," shrewdly guessed the medicine-man.

"What is he saying?" whispered Watt.

"The truth for once, —— him! But it's queer luck that lets the cat out of the bag way down here. Tried to fool them by saying my trade was marked with a red arrow, hoping they'd lose the trail when they didn't find the arrow."

"But there is no red arrow," said Watt, not catching the point.

Despite his danger Palmer smiled, albeit grimly, and softly replied:

"Of course not. That's why I said there was. Hush! Now they are up to something new. Like Santa Fé fleas you never know where to find 'em."

He had reference to Bone Arrow, who was pointing at the blanket, then at the lightning-filled sky with his medicine-lance. Palmer for the first time observed the head of the lance was formed by a broken sword-blade—once the property of an officer. The medicine-man, having secured the attention of all, proceeded to say:

"The Thunderers come to prove this white man left no trade at the fort for the Oglala. Only a *heyoka* man can talk with the Thunderers and understand. Give me the blanket and the lance that killed the Pawnee and I will ride out under the wings of the Thunderbirds and listen to the voice of the Wakinyan!"

Palmer knew the situation was growing most desperate. Should the medicine-man regain his prestige he would dictate the fate of the prisoners. The plainsman called out:

"Have the Oglala forgotten the snake killed with the flat war-club? This man talks with a forked tongue. He knows his medicine is weak. He hopes to close the eyes of the Oglala and make them think it is strong. He even must use the scalp the brave Hunkpapa brought in. He will offer another man's scalp as a feast to the Thunderers to save himself. He will come back and tell you a lie."

As if to refute this assertion, or to sustain it, there came a thunderous crash that sent the warriors crouching against the trees. The chief, too proud to seek refuge, yet mightily disturbed, stared at the heavens through the treetops, one second a roof of ebony and the next a sea of fire. Ignoring the prisoner he directed—

"Let the *heyoka* man talk with Wakinyan."

Palmer feared the battle was lost as Bone Arrow mounted his painted pony and received the blanket and Hunkpapa lance from an Oglala. He wrapped the blanket about his shoulders, then took a lance in each hand, and, holding them out at arm's length, began his ride to the open prairie. And as he went he sang the Thunderbird dreamer's song, "The Horsemen in the Clouds."

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*First traded to the Yanktonai in the Winter of 1853-1354, Lone Dog's Winter count. First Navaho blankets traded to the Dakota in 1858-1859. Battiste Goode's Winter count.

THE RED and white men stared after him as he vanished into the blackness. Even the prisoners were impressed by the magnificent stage-setting the fellow was employing. But he remained unseen for only a fraction of a minute at a time. With each flash of lightning he stood engulfed with noon-day light; a fantastic, barbaric figure; an epitome of the aborigine's devotional belief in demonism. With his arms rigidly extended and his head thrown back he sang to the Nine Horsemen and their different colored coursers.

There was a strong medicine even in his riding forth under that black and red tumultuous arch. The red spectators, firm believers in the superhuman, convinced they were hedged about by countless evil agencies ever seeking to destroy them, and endowing everything with a spirit that at one time or the other was hostile to the human race, knew Bone Arrow was a very brave man. So they waited, breathless and silent, between the glaring flashes and beheld something spectral in each appearance of the man as sheet after sheet of flame revealed him with his two lances now pointing toward the Horsemen.

Then came the last tableau, when the onlookers beheld the man brandishing his lances in a final frenzy; when they saw the bluish bolt of fire streak down to find the steel head of the medicine-lance. Then they were tumbled to the ground, prostrated by the terrible concussion. When they were able to crawl to their feet, and when they dared to remove hands from eyes and stare once more toward the open plain the heavens were lighted to convenience them, and the earth was revealed in the minutest detail. But in place of the Thunderbird dreamer's gesticulating to the Wakinyan and reminding them of his feeble alliance, there was only a dark mound, part horse and part men, and curiously burned.

Minutes passed before the dazed band recovered from the shock of the tragic spectacle. The chief muttered—

"He did not do what he told the Thunderers he would do!"

"He killed the snake of the Unktehi with a blow," reminded Palmer.

"White man, they say your tongue will bring you to death very soon," said the chief, his fear prompting him to wonder if four white scalps would not be an acceptable offering to the Thunder-beings.

Palmer replied:

"Let the Oglala chief, as an honest man, tell me this: Have not the Thunderbirds said the dead Pawnee did not get his blanket from my trade? Did not the medicine-man say he would bring an answer from the Wakinyan to prove the blanket came from my goods? Where is that answer? Bone Arrow could not find it. He died because he had lost his medicine."

The chief had no reply, and he grunted and turned away. Then the rain began to fall heavily. The storm endured only for fifteen or twenty minutes. While the warriors were under their robes Watt and Fair seized the opportunity to inquire closely into their chances of escaping. Doble was too sick at heart to ask questions, or make any suggestions. The death of the medicine-man had quite unnerved him. Palmer could not offer much consolation beyond insisting that every hour gained should improve their chances. He was frank to add that their fate pivoted on the final effect Bone Arrow's death had on the Oglala.

"The chief is scared blue," he added. "I can guess lots of things, but not how an Injun will jump. When he quit us he was planning to make a feast to his personal god. Our scalps would be the feast. But by morning he may believe we're such mighty medicine that it would be suicide to harm us. The chief can't decide whether the medicine-man was killed because he broke his promise to the Thunderbirds, or because he killed the snake. If he believes the last the chances are he won't harm——"

He halted in confusion, unwilling to give false hopes, and unable to pronounce the death-sentence on the three.

But Fair quietly completed—

"Won't harm *you*. What'll they do next?"

"Leave this place. It's taboo."

"Go back to the other, where they caught us?"

"They'll never go back there. That's taboo. In passing that camp they'll swing away from it and ride fast," Palmer explained.

"Wouldn't they chase game into that grove?" persisted Fair.

"Not if they were starving. It's the home of Grandfather Rattler."

"Why, then it's all very simple if we could only break away," exclaimed Fair. "If we could only make that grove we'd be safe from them as long as we stayed there."

Palmer clucked his tongue in warm approval and exclaimed:

"Dawg-gone, Yankee! But there's a clever notion in that! Trouble is to git clear of 'em."

"We'll have to trust to luck—to our medicine, I suppose," sighed Fair.

The rain ceased and the Indians crawled from their shelters and replenished the fires and cooked some meat in kettles, but they offered the prisoners none. The Hunkpapa man had remained apart, grieving over his lost lance and coup trophies; for he would never dare to touch any of the three sacred objects now. But the smell of meat cooking at last brought him into the circle, and They Fear Even His Horses asked him—

"Where is Running Antelope, your brave chief?"

The young warrior remembered he had failed to do his duty, and hastened to inform them:

"Running Antelope rides to find the Oglalas. He will be coming down the river in one or two sleeps. He has been joined by some Cheyennes, who were taking a war-pipe to They Fear Even His Horses. The pipe was broken in a fight with white men. The Cheyennes sent their fastest riders to bring another. Running Antelope wants his brother of the Oglalas to be with him when the pipe is passed. He sent out scouts to find the Oglalas. I was one of them. I was looking for the Oglalas when I killed the Pawnee; first striking him over the head with my bow."

"This is a very big talk," said the chief, his eyes flashing. "My young brother's tongue has been asleep. It is well it is awake. We will ride up the river tomorrow."

Then turning to Palmer, whose heart had almost failed him while he was listening to the Hunkpapa man's belated message, he said—

"White trader, soon you will meet your friend, Running Antelope, chief of the Hunkpapas."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LODGES OF THE SLEEPERS

THERE was no sleep in the camp for the remainder of the night, and only the fear of the Thunderers returning prevented the band from leaving the place immediately. Fires were renewed under the kettles before sunrise so anxious were the Oglalas to get away from the tabooed spot. As they warmed up the meat left over from the evening meal, they cast many terrified glances toward the open prairie where the early light was revealing the grim retribution of the Wakinyan. None spoke the name of the dead medicine-man, nor dared to touch any of his belongings. Those who were serving as pony-herd on the grazing-ground took care to avert their gaze from the hillock, where lay the lightning-blasted remains of the Arikrara-born and his painted pony.

Weak for want of food the four white men waited until convinced their captors had no intention of feeding them; then Palmer called out—

"Ho, you chief of the Oglalas! Are you afraid the white men will grow strong and run away if they have meat to eat, or water to drink?"

They Fear Even His Horses did not deign to look at them, but after a few minutes gave an order, and a kettle of meat was brought and emptied on the ground before the prisoners. Then their hands were released, and the kettle soon made its second appearance, this time filled with water. The white men drank greedily and ate their fill.

There was little time spent in striking camp. Bone Arrow's few belongings were left where he had left them when starting to ride under the Thunderers. The Hunkpapa scout was given Palmer's horse to ride and the plainsman was compelled to travel afoot. A length of rawhide tethered him to a warrior's pony and discouraged any loitering. As they were leaving the grove They Fear Even His Horses spoke to the Hunkpapa man, saying:

"It is good Running Antelope knows we are coming up the Great Medicine Road of the White Man. It is good he knows we ride away from the river till we reach the road and that we will meet him where it crosses the river. If our young brother has a stout heart he can reach the crossing ahead of us by following the river-path over which he came down when hunting for us."

The Hunkpapa man had no desire to take the path as it would lead him by the tabooed grove where the Ancient Rattlesnake was killed and about which the young Oglala men had told him. Yet his duty as a scout made it imperative he report back with all haste to his chief that the Oglala band had been found. The chief read his indecision, and reminded him:

"Our young brother came down the path by the dead snake after we left the timber; and the spirits did not make his pony fall. He was not there when the snake died and the spirits will not see him go by."

"My medicine is very strong," boasted the Hunkpapa. "My heart is very strong. I will go up the path."

And as if fearing he might succumb to his dread of the haunted grove he kicked his heels into Palmer's horse and sped swiftly away.

They watched him disappear, and there was none of the Oglala who would care to ride behind him. The chief led the way on to the open prairie, and as the band drew abreast of the dead man and pony each warrior drew his robe over his head that he might not see the work of the Wakinyan. The white men looked, however, and observed that the broken sword blade, forming the head of the lance, stood nearly erect in the death-clutch of Bone Arrow's hand. The handle had been splintered and the blade was curiously fused. They also noticed that Bone Arrow's medicine-shirt had been ripped from his body.

Not until the hillock was a mile behind them did the Indians drop their robes to their loins and venture to lift their heads and stare around. The day was glorious, but the refreshed land had no charms for the prisoners. Palmer's face was lined with worries. Inch by inch he had fought his way from immediate death and had managed to drag his companions along with him. For more than twelve hours he waged the unequal fight unaided, except as he had utilized the Unktehi.

He had been upheld by the pressing menace of death and had leaped from one climax to another without having time fully to collect his thoughts. Now there was no immediate danger to key up his fighting spirit, inasmuch as the Indians would not halt their journey to torture their prisoners; and his mind found time to visualize the inevitable ending of the sorry affair.

He found himself wishing the tension might be broken. Either they were to be delivered or put to death; and the plainsman was arriving at the point where he would welcome the truth. His weathered, lean face revealed nothing, however, and he was glad to see that Watt and Fair were bearing themselves so as to win the approval of the Indians. Doble was an object of derision. His head sagged on his breast and his long goatee seemed to droop like a wilted plant. He stared between his horse's ears and seldom lifted his gaze to glance ahead or to either side.

Watt endeavored to bolster up his courage, but was rewarded with a hopeless shake of the head.

"—— it, man! You had guts enough when we were fighting the Cheyennes!" Watt rebuked.

"Aye. When we was fighting," was the mournful reply. "Give me a gun or a club, and a chance to go down fighting——"

He did not bother to finish, but concentrated his gaze on the grass just ahead.

"How near will we pass to it, Hale?" Fair asked without turning his head.

Palmer, striding along behind him, understood, and answered, "We're traveling a bit northeast to hit the road. After we strike it and follow it up half a dozen miles, traveling northwest, we ought to be about opposite that grove. Don't think they'll stop to eat till they make their night camp. No chance to bolt while on the march."

"But they must camp tonight," hopefully insisted Fair. "Once it's dark——"

The Indian riding beside him struck him across the mouth with his hand.

Palmer jeered the fellow, saying:

"You are a brave man. You strike a man whose hands are tied. You have counted an eagle-feather coup. They will give you a new name."

The warrior darted him a venomous glance. They Fear Even His Horses called out:

"Let the white trader save his breath. He has a long walk before he can rest. If he is not a friend of Running Antelope he will take another long journey and see many ghosts."

"The Oglala talks as a *heyoka* man acts," retorted Palmer. "When Running Antelope sees his white friend and takes his hand

They Fear Even His Horses will untie my hands and give me back my horse. The Oglalas will never hear me sing my ghost-travel song."

His courage revived somewhat now he was deciding he was to be kept alive until the Hunkpapa band was located. Then contrary to his expectation the Indians halted on reaching the broad, beaten road that led to California and Oregon, to eat meat and to allow the ponies to graze.

Palmer had walked nearly twenty miles and at a rapid pace and was very tired. At the first opportunity he threw himself on the ground. The other prisoners were surprized when they were unbound and given the freedom of the small space in the middle of the camp. Watt boldly approached one group of warriors and fished a big piece of meat from a kettle and carried it to Palmer. No one resented this liberty; rather they approved of it. It evidenced the prisoner would die hard and afford much amusement. While Palmer was removing his moccasins to rub some of the fat on his blistered feet Watt told him—

"Tell the head Injun that I'll do the walking for the rest of the day."

The plainsman sensibly agreed it would be better to split up the fatigue so that none would be helpless did a chance come for them to escape. And the others would depend entirely upon his plainscraft. The Indians seemed to be over their hurry; perhaps believing the Hunkpapa scout would find his chief at the crossing of the Blue and that Running Antelope would await them at the ford, or come down the road to meet them.

The trail was a revelation to Palmer's companions. Each was familiar with the term as applied to a thread of a path in the north woods of New England, in the forests of the far south, and throughout the wooded and hilly sections of Missouri. But this was no southern trace, nor northern trail. It was a noble highway, the greatest natural road in the world, unembellished or improved by surveyor or engineer. In immemorial times the red men had formed the first paths, faint and indistinct. Carrying on tribal wars, or traveling to trade, they had selected routes which presented the fewest obstacles. The white men followed these in conquering the West. The lines of travel laid down by the red surveyors shortened the period of exploration by many years.

The Astorians covered much of this trail and pronounced it suited to wagon-travel. General Ashley's men were familiar with its winding course when the quest for beaver resulted in a penetration of the Sweetwater Valley and the extension of the newly discovered South Pass road to Bear River. Two or three years later Jedediah Smith left the main road at Bear River, circled half around the Great Salt Lake and found his way to the Colorado River, thence across the Mojave deserts to the Spanish towns in the far southwest. Bonneville, Wyeth and Walker, also in turn traveled the trail to the Great Salt Lake and gained the Pacific. With the gold rush to California and the hegira of the Mormons, with the swarming of many settlers to Oregon, the trail became a broad road, sometimes a hundred feet wide, and cut deep by the innumerable heavy wagons. This great increase in travel resulted in numerous cut-offs, and where constant usage had worn out certain sections of the old trail parallel roads were made.

Frémont traveled over much of the old trail before détours and short-cuts became necessary. Three of the Oglalas' prisoners were viewing the strange marvel for the first time. They saw that the prairie turf, dried out and yet not too dry, afforded ideal traveling for horse and man. At this season of the year it possessed a resiliency that permitted the passing of the heaviest wagons. Later in the Summer, with clouds of dust rising from the parched earth, it would be a far different road. The skeletons of oxen, mules, and horses, dotting both sides of the trail at frequent intervals, testified to the price paid in live-stock during the preceding year.

But neither the prisoners, nor their captors, possessed a medicine powerful enough to permit a glimpse of the future, when within the space of a few years the coming of the railroad and the settler would destroy the old road from Independence on the Missouri to the Coasts of the Platte, as the low sand-hills some twenty miles below the head of Grand Island, were called. Here and there a physical trace of it would remain, or a bit of its nomenclature preserved in the name of some new town; but otherwise its eastern glory was to remain only as a memory.

AFTER the ponies had rested and grazed and the band was ready to follow the road to the Big Blue crossing Palmer informed They Fear Even His Horses that his feet were sore, and that his good friend, Running Antelope, would grieve to behold his white brother limping into camp like a wounded buffalo. The chief ordered that the other prisoners were to take turns in walking and that the plainsman was to ride for the rest of the day.

Watt was glad to walk, and a start was made. The band had made some two miles when the advance was halted by a young brave scouting to one side. He wheeled his pony on the crest of a low ridge, waved his buffalo-robe and came tearing down the Slope. Instantly the Indians were on the alert and anxious to hear the scout's report. He informed the chief that there was a smoke far down the road in the south. They Fear Even His Horses rode up the ridge and satisfied himself it was smoke the young man had seen. Returning to the band he sent three of his best-mounted men to scout toward the smoke and report back to him in relays. Because of this incident Watt had an easy time of it afoot; for the Oglalas proceeded at a walk. As a result of this moderate pace the Indians were several miles from the Big Blue ford when one of the scouts was sighted, racing his exhausted pony from side to side, a signal of discovery.

The Oglalas halted, and Palmer murmured to Fair:

"He's seen an enemy. I'm s'prized if it's soldiers."

They had not long to wait to learn the truth. The scout flogged his pony into a final gallop, and riding up to They Fear Even His Horses threw himself to the ground and reported:

"Many wagons. From a hill I saw them. They travel fast for wagons."

"Are the soldiers with them?" demanded the chief.

"Many wagons. I was the first to come back. I was not near enough to see any soldiers."

The Indians dismounted, eager to learn the truth before riding farther. The four prisoners were fastened together with rawhide, and what appeared to the untrained eye to be confusion followed. Those not wearing war-shirts threw aside their robes and were naked to their loins. Particular care was taken to make sure the medicine-bags were strongly secured to the neck-strings. Weapons were overhauled, and even those armed with guns showed their great reliance on bows and arrows by their great care in examining the latter. This possibly because the red man took but poor care of his firearms and permitted them to become foul, while lacking the white man's ingenuity in repairing damage. Some of the young men in their excitement could not practise the stolidity of their elders, and raced their ponies to the surrounding ridges.

The sun was hanging very low in the west when the second scout came in. He had drawn close enough to count twenty wagons. He had not been seen, he was very sure. The wagons belonged to the Great White Chief who lived where the sun started from each morning.

It was evening when the sound of a pony coming at a gallop brought the Oglalas to the road. This was the third scout. He had seen the first wagon swing around and double back, followed by the others, until it was behind what had been the rearmost wagon. He had watched the train settled down in a circle of locked wagons for the night. He had left his pony in a hollow and with grass on his head had crawled to the top of a grassy ridge to secure intimate information. The train was too strong to be attacked so long as it was in camp. If the Oglalas could augment their forces and attack by surprize and while the wagons were in motion the train could be captured. Checking up what white men he had seen by the number of their camp-fires he set their number at a hundred. There were no soldiers. Nor had he seen any women or children.

They Fear Even His Horses rode to one side and considered the matter alone. Then he called three of the older warriors to take counsel with him, and the four talked earnestly for some time. Returning to the band the chief told his men:

"They say to capture the wagons will take many warriors who have strong hearts. If it is captured every warrior will count many coups. They say we must be cunning as the little fox and send for the Hunkpapas to help us. We will camp beyond the place where the road passes between two low hills. Let the son of White Beaver ride fast to the crossing of the river and find Running Antelope and tell him we have found many scalps. The scalps are so many and heavy we can not carry them without the help of the Hunkpapas.

"With the new sun two young men who wish to earn a new name shall ride toward the train and watch it while it travels. One shall come back when the wagons are half-way here. The other shall wait till the wagons have traveled a half of the rest of the way. If either young man lets the white men see him he will be the same as he who raises the buffalo and spoils the hunting."

In orderly procedure the band resumed its journey, now moving rapidly to make camp and "cook their kettles." The son of White Beaver soon left them far behind as he rode furiously through the darkness to find the Hunkpapas. Watt now found himself put to great exertions to keep from being dragged headlong on the trail. However, it was not long before the road passed between two low grassy hills, and a short distance beyond these the band turned to one side and went into camp behind the north shoulder of the western hill; and the ponies were turned out to graze. The moon was now up and shedding a spectral light over the rolling country. At a considerable distance from the camp, and in the direction of the river, showed what appeared to be three lodges. The Indians did not appear to see them, although the pony guard allowed none of the animals to graze toward them.

Only small fires were kindled for fear scouts from the train might make a night reconnaissance and discover them. With subdued excitement the men fell to sharpening their knives and lances, or, sitting apart, consulted their mystery-sacks, while waiting for the meat to cook. Some went without eating and stole away to spend the night alone and in close communion with their medicine. Some clamored for the immediate execution of the prisoners that a feast might be made to the tribal spirits.

But They Fear Even His Horses was now set in his purpose of confronting Palmer with Running Antelope. If the Hunkpapa man asked it, the white man would be spared. The other prisoners would go under the knives shortly before the attack on the wagon-train and with the Hunkpapa band present to enjoy the spectacle. After giving orders that the prisoners be fed and then tied up for the night the chief called several of the older men by name and retired to hold a final council of war.

The prisoners were served with meat and water and were then trussed up, their hands tied behind them, their ankles lashed tightly together, and placed in a row. Watt, who was on the plainsman's right, asked—

"When will the train get up here?"

"Sometime tomorrow afternoon. If there was only some way to warn them!"

Fair, on Palmer's left, inquired:

"Are those tents, or sharp-pointed rocks back toward the river? They look ghostly."

"Ought to look ghostly. They're burial lodges of some Dakota band. Dakotas usually use scaffolds or trees. But sometimes they use lodges; almost always when a person dies of smallpox, or cholera. Crows, Blackfeet, Cheyennes, also bury in lodges sometimes."

"These Indians don't seem to see them. Didn't know but what they were rocks."

"They don't want to see them. Taboo, probably. Not taboo like the grove where the snake was killed, but more like white folks not wanting to wander around in a burying-ground at night."

Sheriff Doble, lying beside Fair, feebly asked—

"I 'low this just about finishes us, don't it?"

"It looks bad, but we're still alive," Watt told him. "Try to get some sleep."

"Sleep," gasped the sheriff. "Last night on earth, and you say for us to sleep!"

"Thinking about it is about as bad as going through with it," said Palmer.

The sheriff collapsed. Watt whispered:

"Tell me the truth. Is there a ghost of a chance?"

"There's hardly any fix so bad that a man doesn't have a ghost of a chance," evasively replied Palmer. More honestly he added, "There isn't a ghost of a chance unless we get away before Running Antelope comes. I traded with him last season, and a French trader made him believe I cheated him. He don't care much for me. Then there's to be a big fight tomorrow if the Hunkpapas come down from the ford. The train has a big crew. If surprized by the two bands while on the march it may be wiped out—probably will be. Depends on how many men Running Antelope brings. If they win the Injuns will be so tickled they'll feed us to their medicine. If they lose, or have to run away without making a fight they'll wipe us out to make their medicine strong. Six of one; six of the other. Wish I could warn the train. Mebbe we can make 'em mad enough to shoot us with a bullet, or an arrer instead of waiting for the knives tomorrer."

"If you could only make them mad enough to shoot!" sighed Watt.

"I can get my hands loose," whispered Palmer. "Pawnee medicine-man, who used to let himself be tied up and put in a net of rawhide, taught me the trick. I saved him from being drowned in the Platte when he went through the ice in the Spring. Got killed by a Cheyenne next season."

"Get to work and untie me and Fair. Fair can untie the sheriff. I don't want to suffer," begged Watt.

"That's something to be thought about," slowly demurred Palmer. "I hate to send you all to death so long's there's a shadder of a chance of you getting clear——"

"You said a ghost of a chance. You don't believe we have even that," argued Watt.

"But you're all alive. To have you killed in your tracks— Yet——"

"Yet if you don't do the trick tonight you won't have another chance," finished Watt. "Do you really believe we have a shadow of a chance?"

Palmer was silent for a minute, then replied:

"Perhaps the shadder of a shadder would be nearer right. It's some distance to the river. Even if we could manage to break clear of the camp, which I don't think for a second we could do, and dodge 'em all night they'd be sure to ride us down before we could find cover."

"I don't want to be hurt by those ——'!" reiterated Watt. "See if Enoch isn't of my way of thinking."

Palmer turned his head and whispered the gist of the talk to Fair. The New England man promptly agreed, saying:

"Let's make the break. No use waiting for a time when things will look more favorable. That time will never come. They won't keep us alive another night."

"It's death if we try it," reminded Palmer.

"But a quick death. I dread the morning worse than I can explain."

"All right. Whisper to the Missouri man and tell him to hold his yap. I'll begin on my hands a bit easy."

Doble received the proposal in a much better spirit than any of his companions had expected. He was greatly relieved at the thought of putting all to the test. What was sapping his nerve-power was the waiting, waiting, while expecting each second to be flayed alive. He was all eagerness for the trial and had to be sternly admonished to remain quiescent and hold his voice to a soft whisper.

Palmer told Watt and Fair to turn their heads toward him so he need not have to repeat his words; and then explained:

"So long as we must scatter and run somewhere, if we're lucky enough to get clear of the camp, I'm going to try for the wagon-train. The rest of you scatter and strike for the river. Chances are you won't get far, yet by a miracle one of you might win through to the grove where the snake was killed. It'll have to be every man for himself, of course—I can shake off my hand cords any time now."

"If we only had a hiding-place, provided we could get a short distance from these fires!" murmured Fair. "Just a hole where we could hide till another night."

"Or till the fighting begins!" sighed Palmer. "Once they rush the train they won't have time to think about anything else. But the country is open. Scouts would quickly locate us and shoot us down with their arrows. Still, that's better'n being skinned. Face the sheriff and I'll get at your cords."

Fair turned on his left side a bit and Watt's left hand stole out and plucked at the stubborn rawhide. It was a difficult task, and for ten minutes Fair could not discover the fumbling fingers had made any impression on the knots. Then he felt the cords give a bit. Watt withdrew his hand and looped the rawhide about his own wrists and whispered, "Twist your wrists so the cords will be tight."

A warrior approaching them prompted the warning. The man roughly examined Watt and Doble, at the two ends of the line, and was less thorough in inspecting the plainsman and Fair. Their cords, so far as a digital examination went, were tight and sound, however, and with a savage grunt the man retired.

"I don't dare do any more till the camp quiets down. We have all night," murmured Plamer.

"The quicker we start the more time a survivor has to travel," countered Fair.

This impressed Palmer as being logical and he answered:

"I'll do as two of you three say. Make a break now, or wait till the camp is asleep. The last is best."

Watt, usually the most impetuous of the four, was for waiting. Fair, by nature more conservative, was for an immediate trial. When he explained the matter to the sheriff he fully expected Doble would agree with him. But now he was promised action the sheriff's mind was working busily. And he advised—

"Better wait till some of 'em turn in."

Overruled and disappointed Fair immediately cast about for some advantage to take the place of the belated attempt. Suddenly he shivered, as if cold, and clicked his teeth. Before Palmer could make an inquiry he was whispering:

"The burial-lodges! You say they don't like to go near them. If we could reach them in the darkness——"

"By ——, Yankee! You've got a head. I've said that much before," whispered Palmer. "I believe that's a good game. And there's always some weapons in those lodges. Tell Missoury while I tell your partner."

Fair's scheme was being disclosed to Doble and Watt when They Fear Even His Horses came stalking into the camp closely followed by his advisors. The other Indians crowded about him and waited for him to speak.

"The white men will be held until Running Antelope comes. If Running Antelope does not call the white trader his friend he shall be skinned first. The four of them will go under the knives when the scout waves a robe to tell us the wagons are coming. If Running Antelope says the trader is his friend, then only three shall be skinned. The Hunkpapa men will charge the wagons from the south side of this hill. The Oglalas will charge from the north side. All will charge from one side so we will not be hitting each other. See that the rawhide is tight, and let us sleep. My medicine tells me that the Oglala will be very strong tomorrow and that some of the young men will win new names. Let us all try to dream of hawks."

The two young men appointed to guard the prisoners for the first half of the night examined the bonds under the scrutiny of the chief. The tiny fires gave off but little light and the rawhide cords were inspected by lifting the feet and by rolling each prisoner partly on his side and feeling of the wrist cords. Palmer had no difficulty in holding his cords tightly in place, and forewarned by him Fair drew his cords taut. Satisfied that all was as it should be the guards stationed themselves at the head and foot of the four men while the rest of the band followed their leader's example and spread their robes and were soon asleep. The men guarding the ponies were signaled to bring the animals closer to the fires so that all but one might take their rest. This was quickly done and in a short time the fires became so many red eyes that seemed to wink and blink malevolently as the white ash filmed over the coals.

NOW came the most crucial time, and Palmer feared his companions would attempt to whisper to him and thereby arouse the suspicions of the two guards. But none of the three made this mistake, although each burned with impatience to have the crisis over with. For an hour the guards alertly kept their positions although they considered their task to be a perfunctory one. At last the man sitting at the heads of the prisoners arose and started for the nearest fire to get a coal for his pipe. His comrade spoke to him softly and he turned back and ran his hand over the wrists of each prisoner and announced that the cords were in place and very tight. The second guard relaxed his vigilance and mechanically lifted each pair of legs, then joined his companion by the fire.

Palmer's two hands shot out to work on the cords of Fair and Watt.

It required but a few moments for him to release Fair's wrists, but he took care to leave the cords in place with the ends in Fair's clinched hands. He was progressing rapidly with Watt's bonds when one of the guards returned.

This fellow's business, however, had nothing to do with his duties as a guard, for he contented himself with rummaging through the sheriff's pockets until he found the plug of tobacco. With a grunt of satisfaction he took the plug to the fire and began cutting it fine with a skinning-knife. Fair began work on the sheriff's wrists, and Palmer finished his task of freeing Watt.

A pony cropped his way close to the

fires and Palmer's eyes glistened with a new purpose. To Watt and then to Fair he whispered:

"I shall try to make the wagon-train. When I jump for the pony the guards will bolt after me. As they do that, and before the others get the sleep out of their eyes you must streak it for the lodges. Reach down and untie your leg-cords, fetch the ends up under your backs so you can hold them tight— Wait!"

One of the guards, having found he could not light the chewing-tobacco, was approaching to make another search. This time he selected Fair and ceased his search once he found a small piece of smoking-tobacco. As he turned back to join his companion four pairs of hands were working on the ankle bonds. The knots were soon untied, and as the Indians had used much cord enough was unwound to reach up to the knees, where the hands could grasp and hold it taut, without leaving the ankles unbound.

Palmer's hopes were dashed when the man guarding the ponies entered the camp to drive the stray back to the herd. But on observing the guards crouching by the fire and busy with something the man stuck his lance into the ground and joined them.

"Make ready!" whispered Palmer. "Don't stir till I get that lance and the pony. Off with the cords! Are you ready?"

Receiving an affirmative, he gathered his feet under him and crawled noiselessly forward. The men at the fire had their backs to him and were listening to the guard's request for a share of the tobacco. The lance was twenty feet from the prisoners, and so intent were the three Indians in dividing the tobacco that the plainsman was almost within reach of the weapon when one of the men happened to swing his head about and observe a dark object on the ground. He barely had ejaculated in amazement when Palmer seized the lance and vaulted upon the pony.

With a startled yell the guards made for him, but instead of retreating he drove the animal at them and, holding the lance under his arm, caught one man in the neck and ripped the life out of him and dashed through the fire and toward the Oregon road. The dead man had scarcely fallen before the three prisoners were on their feet and scuttling through the darkness toward the lodges.

The camp exploded in howls of rage as the warriors threw off their robes and stumbled over the dead man. The voices of the two men, pursuing Palmer afoot, told the Oglalas the direction the chase was taking. There was a general rush to secure mounts, and the three white men, too close to the herd, threw themselves into a little hollow. When the pounding of hoofs receded in the direction of the road they leaped up and continued their flight, trusting to luck to gain the lodges undiscovered. Clouds were masking their flight and at the same time bothering them in locating the lodges. They could see no objects except as a frantic warrior cut the skyline in rounding the north shoulder of the hill.

Doble fell to gasping and sniveling in an hysteria of joy and it required the united efforts of his companions to quiet him. Watt breathed as if choking, and feared his heart would never beat normally again. Fair ran with his mouth open, unable to get enough air; and through the mind of each rioted the realization that he had escaped the Oglala knives. And each inwardly vowed he would die fighting before being taken a prisoner again.

From the road came the cries of those streaming down the ancient way, riding furiously although the clouds shut out the moonlight. Then sounded a new note. The guards had collected their wits and succeeded in securing a hearing. They were saying that but one man rode away. The yells of rage were immediately mixed with howls of rejoicing; and while the swiftest riders continued the pursuit of Palmer the others spread out over the rolling prairie to cut off the three men on foot.

The guards could give no information as to the direction taken by the prisoners, as their attention had been taken up with Palmer. So the Oglalas rode to all quarters. The white men might escape capture in the darkness, but once the blanket of darkness was lifted it would require the interposition of an extraordinary medicine to save them from being retaken. Each warrior inspected his war-equipment and pronounced it to be intact. The only weapon missing was the pony-guard's lance.

The fugitives kept close together, their ears alive for hostile sounds. Once a pony bore down on them and they threw themselves to the ground and a rider cut across their trail in a wide circle, a blurred rushing mass moving at random. The Indians did not know whither the men had fled, or that they had kept together. So the red riders scattered widely, some even crossing to the east side of the road. The white men were missing Palmer's plainscraft. It had been simple to make for the lodges of the dead, but with the failing of the light and their constant taking to some hollow as a rider approached, they soon discovered they could not agree on the right direction. The drifting clouds prevented the stars from aiding them, and peculiarly enough it was the enemy that enabled them to define the right course. They were beginning to believe they were moving in a circle when a light sprang up in the direction Sheriff Doble insisted they should take. Watt exclaimed:

"Thank God for that camp-fire! They've thrown more wood on it. This is the way."

And he turned his back on the fire and ran rapidly.

No illumination from the fire could betray them and yet they feared they were fully revealed to the ferocious eyes. Whenever one of them glanced back he was sure to see the silhouette of an Oglala passing between him and the blaze.

"I've found something," announced Doble, who was in the lead. "—— me! It's a wigwam. Let's keep on going and make the river."

"Inside! Inside!" hoarsely urged Watt, rushing to the shelter made of buffalo-hides and brushing his hands over it to locate the opening.

They finally found the opening and crawled inside. Fair blundered against a low trestle on which was resting a long bundle of blankets and robes. He yanked his hands back from the bier and crept to the side of the lodge. He bumped into Watt, who was running his hands over a saddle and a lance. The discovery of the weapon pleased them much and they pushed their quest for more. Fair found a bow and some arrows, but doubted if he could use them effectually. Doble won a prize in a long knife in a bead-worked sheath. Watt stole from the lodge and visited another. He soon returned with two lances. Two men were buried there, he reported, and were on the ground. This suggested that the lodge they were in was the burial-place of a chief.

Now came the nerve-strangling work of remaining quiescent and waiting for the first light to reveal the plain. The fact they were in a mortuary chamber affected them none: they had suffered too intensely to be afraid of the dead. Occasionally they caught the sound of a voice crying, sounding faint and far off, and at first they shivered in dread lest it be the signal of Palmer's recapture. But as it was repeated at quite regular intervals they decided the Indians were merely keeping in touch with each other as they quartered the country in great circles. Toward morning they heard the signal to the west of them and knew some of the Indians had thrown themselves across the path to the river.

IT WAS still dark in the lodge when Watt peered out the opening and discovered he could make out much of the landscape. And now came the fear they had left a trail which the Indians could follow. Fair took the sheath-knife Doble had found and cut a tiny hole in the east side of the lodge. Through this he spied on the distant hill which bordered the Oregon road. He saw Indians riding over the prairie and swinging low from their ponies to discover some trace left by the runaways. But so much indiscriminate racing back and forth had been indulged in that whatever signs the white men might have left in the short buffalo-grass had been obliterated. The ponies, too, needed a rest if they were to participate in a battle; and as the sun rose the Indians flocked back to the camp.

Watt frightened his friends by giving a low hiss. Then he warned them to keep well to the sides of the lodge as Indians were slowly riding in from the west. They were strung out in a long line, covering all the ground possible, and looking for signs. These were the men who had hastened to cut the fugitives off from the river-timber. After they had passed the lodges Fair drew a deep breath, and exclaimed—

"I really believe he got away!"

"If he did then he surely has warned the wagon-train," said Doble.

The sheriff was in a disagreeable mood despite the great improvement in his fortunes. He was repeatedly forgetting he had no tobacco and was profanely fretful each time he reached into his pocket for the plug.

Watt arose and examined the muffled

occupant of the bier. He had been a man of consequence as was shown by his war-bonnet, with each feather counting a coup. Palmer could have told them the man probably had carried the pipe at least four times on a big path. Around the edge of the bier were hung scalps, mostly taken from red foes, and a medicine-sack and several knives. In addition to the saddle against the side of the lodge were several camp-kettles, several blankets and robes, and three long pipes. A white wolfskin, crudely stuffed, was suspended over the bier, either as a symbol of the decedent's medicine, or as a reference to his gens, or clan.

The body itself was swathed in many robes and only the sunken face was visible. The opening at the side and another at the apex of the lodge had kept the air clean, or else the dry air of the prairie had had time to mummify the corpse. The refugees noticed no effluvia.

None of them thought of food but they did crave water. When grown used to dwelling on the miracle of their escape they began to worry over the next few hours. Perhaps they feared some malignant fate was playing with them, relieving their desperate plight for a few hours so that their suffering might be redoubled when again made prisoners. They took turns watching the Indian camp, until the spectacle of rapidly moving dots leaving and entering the camp became monotonous. They could not see how this frantic riding served any red purpose. Very slowly the minutes crawled away and the sun was nearly overhead when a faint shouting alarmed them. Doble, who happened to be at the peephole, exclaimed:

"Great hickory! Never alive! They're coming, boys!"

Watt forcibly took his place. The camp seemed to be in much confusion. Men were running to their ponies and whooping in concert. Suddenly the warriors were mounted and formed in a double line, but their course was northwest and not toward the lodges. As they rode from the camp They Fear Even His Horses galloped to the front, dressed in all his war toggery and carrying a long coup-stick in his right hand. It was not until Fair had thrust the knife through the north side of the lodge that the fugitives learned the cause of the excitement. Another band of Indians was approaching from the direction of the river-crossing.

"Running Antelope and his men!" cried Fair.

More slits were made, and all four watched the meeting of the Oglala and the Hunkpapa braves. Ahead of the latter skimmed the pony of the Oglala messenger, eager to get back and take his place in the barbaric procession. Ahead of his men rode Running Antelope, bedecked with trophies and ornaments. He carried a lance that was fringed with medicine-feathers and a round shield. On the latter was a drawing of some kind of bird. From his pony's bridle dangled and flapped several Arikara scalps, for he had been a terrible scourge to that tribe.

With uplifted arms the two bands met, shouting their songs and boasting their personal exploits. The Hunkpapas opened their lines and the Oglalas rode through and fell in behind them. They Fear Even His Horses turning about to ride beside the Hunkpapa chief.

Fair counted seventy of the newcomers, but did not know that at least a score of them were Cheyennes of the same band that had attacked him and his friends on the Republican. The combined force trotted back to the camp where more fires were built and more kettles put on to cook. The Hunkpapas had brought much fresh meat with them, and this was equally divided with the Oglalas—a most welcome gift to the Oglalas, who had had no time to hunt.

"About a hundred altogether, and every one a fighting man," mused Watt. "They'll give the wagon train a hard fight."

"You're forgetting that Palmer must have warned the train," reminded Fair.

"Even if warned they'll make the attack," insisted Watt.

Exhausted by nervous strain and loss of sleep the comrades threw themselves upon the buffalo-robes and directed Doble to arouse them in an hour. They managed to sleep; but Doble, fascinated and never wearying of spying upon the camp, did not awake them until the middle of the afternoon.

"Something's happened," he whispered as he shook them out of sleep. "Feller just rode in lickety-larrup. Mebbe he's guessed we're here. If he has we ain't no more show'n a cat in —— without claws."

"If they come within reach they'll find

we have a chance to do damage," Watt savagely replied, getting on his knees and reaching for a lance.

But Fair, now at the peephole, could discover no move that would indicate their presence in the death-lodge was suspected. The men were running to their ponies, but the scout, still mounted, was facing the southwest and down the Oregon road.

"Train's coming! Palmer couldn't have made it," groaned Fair.

"If he's dead, then a very brave man has gone away," said Watt. "Once those ——'s take to the road we'll make a break for the river. I'll kill myself on this lance before I'll let them take me alive."

What had impressed them as being confusion quickly straightened out into an orderly maneuver; and the two bands were mounted, and the Hunkpapas were riding behind the hill and to the south. The Oglalas were walking their ponies to the north shoulder of the hill, having much the shorter distance to go. This could mean only one thing—the wagon train, whether warned or not, intended to push forward. The noise ceased and the Indians sat their mounts without song or war-cry. Several scouts were nimbly scrambling up the back side of the hill. Over the south shoulder of the hill was a faint haze that Watt pronounced to be dust. Doble was impatient to be making for the river, but Watt had changed his mind about an immediate departure, and said:

"We must wait till the fight begins and every man's attention is fixed on the road. Lord! If we only had rifles! How we could pump it to them!"

The haze drew nearer and thickened. The Indians waited, motionless and silent. They could see nothing of the road but the scouts, lying on the crest of the hill with grass over their heads, occasionally signaled to both bands.

Then all the scouts but one came down the slope in flying leaps and flew to their ponies. Now the tension was increased. The ponies minced and stepped about as if feeling the impatience of their riders. Last examinations were made of bows and arrows and lance-heads. Those who had smooth-bore guns looked to their flints. The dust was very perceptible now, and the white men groaned as they realized their inability to give warning of the trap.

Next they were puzzled by the behavior of the lone scout on the hill. He drew back from the crest and began signaling to the Oglalas. Much uneasiness was at once displayed in the ranks of these, and a messenger was sent on a crazy gallop around to the south shoulder of the hill to carry some word to Running Antelope. The chief backed his pony from the front line of warriors and rode furiously back after the messenger. They Fear Even His Horses had raced after his messenger, and the two chiefs met and consulted briefly.

The Oglala chief whipped his pony all the way back to his men, waved his coup-stick and shouted an order, then wheeled and again rode behind the hill with his men streaming along behind him. Thus the two bands were united once more. In open formation they rushed around the south shoulder and, yelling and whooping, disappeared from the white men's view.

There came the crackling of many guns and the booming voices of white men, hurling profanity and defiance. There was not an Indian in sight to dispute their going, and the four whites stole from the lodge and ran like mad in the direction of the Big Blue. But run as they could they could not lose the sound of the heavy gunfire, too heavy for the Indians' few smoothbores. They could not understand just what had happened, and yet it was simple enough.

When all but one of the scouts on the hill had descended to report, the train apparently was about to enter between the two hills. The one scout who had remained had seen the train abruptly cease its forward movement. The head wagon had swung out to the east side of the road and turned back. Had the Oglalas charged they would have found the road between the hills empty. By the time the scout had made his report and the two bands were united the head wagon was locked by pole to the rearmost, the train was in a circle with the mules on the inside, and the crew was busily building barricades of bags and boxes under the long bodies and ready for the fight.

The comrades came to a tiny creek and threw themselves down and drank as if they could never get enough. It was the first water they had had in almost twenty-four hours. They drank too much and were loggy and ran poorly! Doble developed obstinate hiccoughs and could keep up only by a desperate effort. The firing grew fainter, and at last dropped to an occasional shot. Whether winners or losers the Indians would soon be back behind the hill, and the grove on the Blue was a sanctuary. The sheriff groaned and collapsed. Watt and Fair halted and dragged him to his feet.

"Go on, I'll come when I can!" he gasped.

"—— you! Come now! You troublemaker!" snarled Watt, giving him a violent yank.

And each took hold of an elbow and accommodated his gait to that of the heavy feet and forced him along until he got his second wind. They came to an old buffalo-wallow, partly filled by the recent storm, and although the fastidious would have turned from it, the fugitives threw themselves into the muck, face down, and sucked in the green-scummed water.

"If I only had a chaw of tobaccer!" groaned Doble as he staggered along.

"You're still wearing your scalp," panted Fair.

Doble's hiccoughs disappeared and he seemed to take on new strength. His long legs developed a speed that amazed his friends, and the next mile was made in excellent time. They ran and they walked. At times they dropped inert and puffed for breath. But the green fringe of the timber was drawing nearer each rod, and to gaze on it sent new life to the weary feet and incited the heart to work just a bit faster. They had no idea how close they would strike to the tabooed camp. Palmer had said it was about due west of the two hills. When they had only a quarter of a mile to go they dropped in their tracks for one more bit of rest.

Doble happened to glance behind him and he beheld the flapping robe of a red rider on top of the nearest ridge. With a scream of terror he sprang to his feet and started running swiftly to the woods. The Indian raised a wild cry to some one behind him and began making signals by standing on his pony and waving his blanket. When he raced down the slope after the white men a second rider took his place against the blue sky; then another.

"If they come in after us, Hale, we must try to swim the river," Fair managed to jerk out.

When they broke through the first line of green growth six Indians were coming in hot pursuit. Watt, who was in the lead, turned to glance back, caught his toe against a root and plunged head first to the ground. Fair yanked him to his feet and beheld a face black from hair to chin.

"We've hit it!" he cried. "You stuck your head into the charcoal left by the fire!"

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SHERIFF COUNTS A COUP

THE Indians, five Oglalas and one Hunkpapa, rode madly toward the grove, but turned their ponies aside when within arrow-shot of it, and loosed several shafts. One of the ponies had a long raw wound on his flank, testifying to the desperate nature of the fight at the wagon-train. Until the Indians swerved from their onward course the white men feared the taboo of the spot would not protect them. But after the ponies had raced by their hiding-place the second time Watt declared—

"They know we haven't any arms, except a lance, and yet they don't dare come in."

"Wish we knew how the fight went!" cried Fair. "If they won they'll starve us out."

Doble fished among the charred remains of a camp-fire and brought forth the vertebrae of the big rattlesnake and carefully fastened it to the end of a long pole and stood the pole upright at the end of the cover so the Indians might see the reptile's skeleton. The Oglalas at once increased the distance between themselves and the grove, but the Hunkpapa did not seem to share their fear of the spot. He would not advance among the trees but he stubbornly rode back and forth, howling like a demon, and shooting his smooth-bore and his bow and arrows.

Fair essayed a shot at him with the bow taken from the death-lodge but could do nothing. The red men hooted derisively as the long arrow rose lazily and fell in the grass. Doble nervously requested:

"Lem'me try that, mister. I used to play with 'em when we boys would visit the red younkers in the Kansas villages."

Fair readily surrendered the weapon, and the sheriff knelt behind a bush and fitted an arrow to the cord. He waited until the Hunkpapa turned and raced back across their front, and then released the arrow.

The long shaft streaked away in a businesslike fashion, but Doble had not allowed for the speed of the missile, nor the speed of the pony. However, the arrow lodged in the animal's flank and flapped back and forth. The pony wheeled and bolted up the slope. Watt and Fair cheered wildly and the Missouri sheriff was much lifted up in spirit.

From beyond the ridge came the faint popping of guns, a scattering fire and not radiating from any particular direction. Watt ceased his cheering to listen carefully. Then he excitedly shouted:

"Those are not smooth-bores! Those are rifles talking! White men are riding hard and firing as they go. That means they've whipped the Injuns!"

Fair and Doble were anxious to believe this, but refused to indulge in false hopes. The sheriff fitted another arrow and sent it in a long curve up the slope. It struck within a few yards of an Oglala, who was giving his attention to the noises over the ridge. The Hunkpapa now managed to bring his wounded pony under control and sent him up the slope to join the Oglalas. Before he could reach the top of the ridge an Indian cut the skyline, glancing behind him as he rode.

He did not pause to speak with the six Indians, but raced down the ridge and swerved north toward the crossing of the Blue. A ghastly wound across the top of his head had caked his face and neck with blood. He was without weapons except a skinning-knife in his girdle, and his one desire seemed to be to ride away. The sound of shots steadily grew nearer; and the Oglalas and Hunkpapa, after one look over the ridge, turned in mad haste and rode after the fleeing warrior.

The white men, now hoping for the best, stood clear of the timber and started up the slope. Indians began streaming into view, all making for the crossing and taking no heed of the three fugitives. Many of them were wounded and several were tied to their ponies and appeared to be dead. Some forty warriors had thus whipped their tired ponies into view before They Fear Even His Horses and Running Antelope, riding side by side, appeared. Like their followers the two chiefs were anxious to reach the crossing. There was no longer any doubt in the white men's minds as to the outcome of the attack on the wagon-train; and the three of them capered about grotesquely and shouted until their throats ached.

At last came the welcome spectacle of white men topping the ridge. With the exception of the leader they were stripped to the buff and some had red smears on their deep chests. The leader was tall and gaunt and wore a buckskin coat, and he reined in his horse and stared toward the woods, more interested in the timber than in the frantically fleeing red men. There was no mistaking him. And as he flung up one fringed arm in joyous greeting the fugitives shouted his name and ran to meet him. There was a blood-stained cloth around his head that gave him an unusually bloodthirsty appearance as he recklessly rode to the foot of the slope. He threw himself from his horse and in silence shook the extended hands.

"Hooray for Prairie Palmer!" hoarsely cried the sheriff.

"It was a shadder of a shadder of a chance," Palmer muttered. "Our medicine was mighty strong."

Watt suddenly felt weak and sat down. Doble, less sensitively organized, began clamoring for a chew of tobacco.

"The boys will fix you out," assured Palmer.

And he yelled for those who were still chasing the Indians to turn back.

In a few minutes twenty wagon-men were galloping around the four friends, cheering loudly and swearing lavishly.

"I told them I hoped to find you here," explained Palmer. "I looked into the burial-lodges on the way here and saw where you had cut peepholes in the skins. Well, we'll be going back."

He mounted and led the way to the top of the ridge. A man galloped toward them yelling like mad. To the amazement of Fair and Watt the newcomer proved to be "Slim," Bully Jacks's right-hand man. Slim seized their hands and began shouting:

"Bully Jacks is back with the train! Wanted to come along like —— but his place was there. Hoo-yough!"

"Jacks? Out here? And you, Slim? You two were going to Leavenworth," said Fair.

"Got orders not to make the east trip but rush more supplies to Kearny and Laramie. The two forts may be cut off from supplies for a while. And the sight of you young —— is good for sore eyes! Hi-yu!"

Palmer called for volunteers and rode after some riderless ponies and soon rounded up a dozen of the animals and selected three of the freshest for his friends. As they made their way back through the gathering dusk to the Oregon road and the waiting train he briefly described his mad ride to warn the train. He was so closely pursued he had had no time fully to identify himself and had been fired upon by some of the sentinels and had narrowly escaped being shot.

It was late at night when they reached the train. Some of the men had galloped on ahead to announce the rescue and several large fires were burning briskly when the escaped prisoners rode inside the circle. By the light of the fires they observed arrows still sticking into the wagons while the canvas covering of almost every vehicle was slashed and torn. Outside the wagons and quite close were several dead ponies, but all the slain warriors had been snatched up and carried away.

Doble's identity and business had been told before he entered the wagons, and the men had nothing but cold looks for him. It required Watt's good offices to procure him a plug of tobacco. Bully Jacks was one of the first to greet them. His scarred face glowed with delight and his speech was replete with oaths as he shook Fair and Watt by the hand. Toward the sheriff his bearing was very disagreeable, and he loudly declared—

"Been much better to let the Injuns take that cuss away with 'em."

Then directly to the sheriff—

"What give you the notion to come chasing white men round out here?"

Again Watt interceded and called on Fair to bear witness that Doble had proven himself a man of mettle. But Jacks doggedly insisted—

"Missoury writs ain't worth a hoot'n —— up here!"

"I ain't said a word about 'resting nobody," grieved the sheriff. "Always some one else that's got that word in the mouth."

Watt hastened to confirm this statement and to explain the agreement whereby he was to have a good start for freedom once they were clear of the Indians. Jacks grinned wickedly, and cried:

"That's a good talk! You'll start from Kearny with me. We'll make about twenty miles a day; and yet I'll bet a season's pay that this feller don't ever overtake us."

Comforted by a huge cud Doble nodded pleasantly and surprized the comrades by willingly agreeing.

"Nothing could be fairer'n that. Wagon-train will be a good place for you, too."

"He's up to some —— game!" muttered Bully Jacks.

IN THE morning the wagon-train began the ascent for the Little Blue, following up the valley for three days and making fifty odd miles. Then the course turned from the river to cross some twenty-five miles of high prairie and at last struck into the great valley of the Platte, fifteen miles from Fort Kearny.

The fort buildings consisted of several frame houses and as many adobe structures. A large number of Pawnees were camping near the fort and were dancing an Arapaho man, who had been killed while trying to steal some ponies.

When the train came to a halt just outside the fort Sheriff Doble was transformed into a new man. His lank figure straightened up as if to reflect the importance of his office. His head was held erect and the goatee became aggressive. When he requested Fair and Watt to accompany him before the commander Bully Jacks lowered on him savagely and promised to "wring" his neck if he tried any game.

"It's only a form," assured the sheriff.

"What about the start I was to have?" growled Watt. "Was that only a form?"

"There you go again! You're thinking I'm up to some low-down trick. All I want is for you to give your name before the commander, and sign a writing that shows I met you up here. Once you do that and you can have all the start you want, and less you travel back toward old Missoury you'll never have me behind you."

Much puzzled, but confident the sheriff could never get his man out of the country Watt and Fair went with him, with Bully Jacks belligerently bringing up the rear. Watt promptly identified himself to the commander, told of his family connections and described in general terms his home at Wattsville, Mississippi. He explained nothing about his presence on the Platte, nor did the sheriff request him to do so. When he had finished Doble beamed on him most amiably and produced a piece of paper and, after filling in one or two blanks, read it rapidly. It simply stated that at the request of Doble, Watt had declared his identity before the commander at Fort Kearny, that Doble had shown great zeal in finding his man and in giving to him the contents of a telegraphic message received by the sheriff at Lexington.

"If you'll just sign that before these witnesses——" began the sheriff.

"No, sir. I have received no message. I can't sign any such statement."

"Just one of his —— law games! But she'll never work!" rumbled Bully Jacks.

Doble smiled broadly and from an inside pocket produced a second piece of paper that was much the worse for travel, dirt and water. The writing, in lead pencil, was still legible, however. Watt took it and with some difficulty read:

> Sheriff, Lexington, Missouri. Find Hale Watt, Wattsville, Miss. Should be on any boat bound up-stream. Tell him man recovering. He can come home any time. No annoyance. Thousand dollars if this information given him without publicity.
>
> JONATHAN WATT.

"From my father!" exclaimed Watt.

"Some one is recovering," prompted Fair.

Watt sighed in great relief and stepped to the window. When he came back he was composed, and tersely explained:

"Had a fight. Other chap drew first, but I got him. Supposed he was dead. Cleared out. Seems he's getting well and there'll be no fuss, and father wants me to come back. They're trying to spare the family name by keeping it quiet. And I've been dodging it, thinking it was request for my arrest! But why'n —— didn't you tell me all this instead of chasing me out into this Injun country?" The last was to the sheriff and was not all amiable.

Doble coughed and explained:

"It's a lot of money for me. A thousand dollars— Your old man wanted it done quiet like. Had to be sly in looking for you in Kansas. Didn't want to divide with any of them sharks down there. Didn't want to let the truth out. No publicity, says your old man. Before I could git the thousand I'd have to prove I'd given you the message. What if I'd blatted it out and you'd refused to sign any receipt for the message and just 'lowed you'd keep on rambling and visit Californy? Where would my thousand dollars be then?'

"Lord knows you're welcome to the thousand!" sighed Watt. "But if I'd known the truth I'd saved myself lots of worry and dad lots of worry. However, you've earned the money, sheriff. You'll get it. Give me the papers and I'll sign both. You've counted a coup."

When they had returned to the train Jacks lamented:

"Two best men I ever had a chance to take on! Now you'll both be going back, I reckon."

Fair's face was despondent.

"Hale must go back. It's his duty. I'll go through to Laramie with you, Jacks. Then I'll keep on and try for the Coast. I've jumped bail, and it won't do for me to return to Kansas. If they indict me it means five years at hard labor."

"If you don't go, then I don't go," stoutly insisted Watt.

Jacks' hopes rose. Doble quietly announced:

"Jedge Lecompte is a friend of mine. We've traded a little land together. I'll guarantee there won't be no indictment. Mr. Watt, here, would have a heap of influence with the jedge, too. But he needn't open his yap. I'll tend to it. No, sirree! If I say a man's sound and tight he ain't going to be indicted. If I don't have the whole business quashed and dropped inside of an hour after I get Lecompte's left ear then the Watts down in Mississippi needn't pay me no thousand dollars."

"Why, then!" cried Fair. "There's no reason why I shouldn't return and try stock-raising again. The sooner we can start the better I'll like it."

"If you want a game busted and spoiled just git a sheriff to meddle with it," muttered Bully Jacks.

But the business of returning to Kansas was one attended by great danger. Jacks sensibly insisted the three men wait until they could be escorted by soldiers, or go back with the wagon-train on its return trip from Fort Laramie. This was agreed to. That night, while they were smoking their pipes and the sheriff was chewing his cud Prairie Palmer returned from a visit to the Pawnee camp. Fair remarked:

"It's been bully while it lasted, Hale. Hope you'll come up-river sometime and see me and your claim."

Watt nodded slowly, and said:

"I must go back and see the folks. But

there's nothing particular for me to do in Wattsville. I haven't given up my notion to raise stock. Maybe I can split up my time between loafing at home and working on Mill Creek. Hi, sheriff! We haven't bothered to thank you for throwing lead at the gang of Cherokees when they had us cooped up."

"That's all right," lazily replied Doble. "I mentioned it once before to you but you didn't seem to make much account of it. Reckon I was some selfish in chipping in as I did. I hated like sin to see them breeds shoot up a thousand dollars. Ain't human natur' cur'ous? Moves 'round in a circle. And here we be, just like so many brothers! What'll you do next, Mr. Palmer? Go to farming?"

"I'm Western. My back's to the East. If I can make the headwaters of the Arkansas I shall take a trade to the Arapahos. Trade on the Platte is spoiled for a season or two. But I'll never be shut up in the East."

THE END

# THE OLD-TIMER'S LAMENT

### by Helen Combes

IT'S lonesome round th' old cook-shack this eve,
Soon's they'd et, an' got th'r chores all done
Th' boys lit out f'r town—I plumb buhlieve
Long John—an' mebbe Redtop—packed a gun.
Pay-day tuh-day; they aims tuh have some fun.
But me—I stays at home, tuh fret an' grieve.

They ain't no reason 's far es I can see
Tuh worry, when these kids goes off at night,
Hell-bent on what they call a jamboree,
Like shootin' up th' town. They even might
Paint th' blame burg a sickish green er white;
Come home at ten, boastin' erbout th'r spree.

Hell's hinges! Ain't this world a nawful place?
An' ain't this life es tame es cookee's cat?
A *hombre* gets no chanst tuh go th' pace,
Tuh drink an' gamble till he's busted flat,
Land up in jail not knowin' where he's at;
Er croak with boots on, an' a smilin' face.

Life ain't wuth livin' f'r a old-time guy,
That's looked upon good likker when 'twas red.
That made th' limit when he bet th' sky,
An' worked, an' played an' drank—an' by an' by
Cashed in his checks—game tuh th' end—while I
Just set eround—not knowin' that I'm dead.

# MAREA'S FANCY MAN

by Bill Adams

*Author of "Liverpool to Vancouver," "The Helmsman of the Harper," etc.*

IN THE Martin Vaz *estaminet*, in the port of Antwerp, sailors sat in companies of two and three and four, drinking at little tables; calling often across the large room, one to another. It was late evening time, lamps lighted, the Winter weather audible without. Rain fell, the wind out of west a little northerly; but the Martin Vaz was warm.

Girls, passing to and fro amongst the sailors, gathered empty glasses for refilling, and stayed now and then to pass a word with one or other of the drinkers.

At a small table, far from both bar and door, sat two men who paid no heed to those at other tables. One was a tall sailor; so lean, so emaciated in fact, that it was plain to any one who looked at all closely at him, that he must be a sick man. His cheekbones were prominent, his colorless cheeks sunken; his eyes too bright; his shoulders stooping. One hand about his glass, he sat, hunched within himself, and seemed to stare somewhat amusedly at his companion.

His companion was his contrast; a short, heavy-handed fellow of great girth; a hard and bony sailor with a fierce face. His hair, his eyes, were each of a dull color; though frequently the latter took a sudden glow, while his lips muttered inaudibly. Beside his tall *vis-à-vis* he seemed of short stature; though of medium height. The man looked mad.

Marea, the tall, bright-headed girl, seemed to avoid the table where sat these two sailors.

Now and again, an expression somewhat furtive on his face, the tall man glanced toward her; his eyes most contemptuous ere again he turned away to look, always with that air of well-controlled amusement, at his savage-seeming friend.

Behind them, when neither could see her, the girl threw an occasional quick glance toward the two; her gaze resting on the tall sailor; her face flushing. Always she avoided the eyes of the other; appearing to dread him.

Suddenly, half-rising in his seat, the fellow made as though to approach her.

"Sit—sit," muttered the tall man, his outstretched hand upon his companion's arm; then, coughing rackingly, looking into the other's glowing eyes, smiled his swift, scarce perceptible smile again. The savage sailor's eyes were like coals, flaring and fading, changing from hot lights to somber shadows; as though blown upon by fanning breaths.

"Don't you knows," said the tall man, "don't you knows it ain't no good to foller gal what don't want you longer?"

His eyes held the wild eyes of his comrade; his voice appearing to soothe him.

"I veesh I know who steal—den I keel 'eem," growled the somber sailor; then, raising his hands toward the other, made with them a quick, twisting motion; as though he wrung the neck of some large bird.

"Lak dat! Lak dat!" he snarled.

"Never found who stole yer gal away; eh, Kylon, old Finn?" asked a sailor who,

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"Marea's Fancy Man," copyright, 1924, by Bill Adams.

passing between the tables, caught his first low-spoken words.

The mad-seeming sailor, his eyes flare-lit again, leaped up.

"I keel 'eem!" he cried, his voice so sudden, so enraged, that others turned to stare at him.

At that instant a man, entering from the street, flung the door of the *estaminet* wide, letting a cold blast blow in; so that Marea snugged her golden head down into her pretty bare shoulders, while the fat proprietor cried loud to the newcomer to close the door; his voice lost, drowned, by the voice of the fellow who, having flung the door open, now stood in the doorway.

"You *Akaroa* hands," he shouted, as though he stood upon the deck of some great ship instead of at the entrance to a warm drinking-room, "get aboard now! Tide's coming to flood."

He turned and spoke to a man indistinctly in the night's murk behind him.

"Bosun, get 'em all aboard! See that they get down to the ship!"

His glance, roving the room, hesitated an instant on Marea's face; then passing on:

"Bosun," he said, looking to the table where sat the two strange sailors, "see yonder fellow? He's a corpse a'ready, ain't he? The Old Man had to take who he could get. Sailors is scarce just now."

Sailors, rising, were finishing their glasses; some grinning at the mate of the *Akaroa* and bidding him take a drink with them; the mate making no reply, but, still standing in the doorway, letting the wintry wind blow in.

"Get 'em along, bos—let's get her to sea!" he said again, and turned to the street; sailors following at his heels, all careless of wind and rain.

The bosun, entering the *estaminet*, stood to take tally of the *Akaroa's* hands as they passed out.

"You *Akaroa*, eh? Then hop along, me lad! Aboard you gets, an' quick! You? All right, son. Make it lively!"

Soon there were none left but men from other ships, save only the two at the far table. The boatswain strode toward them and, a hand on the shoulder of the shorter man, said:

"Sons, git down to th' dock—tide's at the flood. We must get her over the sill an' out to the stream. Move along now!"

The thin man was racked horridly by a spell of coughing.

"I speaks mine gal mit," cried the short sailor and, rising, stood with his large fingers clutching the table edge, his chin outthrust toward Marea, whose back was toward them now; as though she had not heard.

"Gal be ——! There's gals aplenty waitin' ye in Frisco, lad—get aboard now!" said the boatswain.

The short sailor paid no heed to the bosun and but for the thin man's hand again upon his arm, would have stepped toward the girl. The tall sailor seemed to exert a strange fascination upon him.

"Yer chum's drunk," said the bosun to the tall man. "Help me get 'im aboard, will ye?"

"We is going to sea—you 'n' me'll ferget the gals," said the tall sailor, looking down into the other's dull face.

The fat proprietor called the tall man to the bar to take a last hot shot of rum for his coughing; bidding Marea pour him a good tot of the liquor. The morose sailor stood, facing the doorway, staring to the bosun.

" 'E helps me find de man vot steals mine gal from me—ven ve find 'eem, I keel 'eem," he muttered, adding as he again made that quick neck-twisting motion with his hooky hands, "lak dat! Lak dat!"

At the bar the other swallowed in one long gulp his rum; taking no heed whatever of the bright-haired girl, who, her eyes seeking his, stood face-flushed before him.

In a moment he rejoined his comrade and the boatswain.

"Come on, son—we'll not find him here," he said.

They passed to the street; the short man, at the door, hesitating, looking backward; Marea gone from sight through a side door; the tall man's hand on his comrade's arm, drawing him on.

"How long ye been ashore, longfellow?" asked the bosun of the tall sailor.

"Five weeks," replied the sailor, and coughed violently.

"Ain't done ye no good, eh?" said the bosun.

"I've had my fun," said the sailor.

"Queerfellow, how long ye been ashore?" asked the bosun of the other.

"Kylon, he's been ashore a week," the tall sailor answered for the other. "He'd ought to 'a' come sooner. They stole his fancy gal while he was at sea—his fancy gal what he was going to marry," said the tall man.

"*'Staminet* gals ain't no good to marry," said the boatswain.

The short sailor, hesitating again, tried to turn back; then, moving onward again, cried:

"I keels 'eem ven I finds 'eem! I keels 'eem!"

"I'll help you find him, son; I'll help you find him, see?" said his tall friend soothingly.

"You's both on ye squareheads," said the boatswain. "You'd oughter be pals."

"We is old pals; isn't we, Kylon?" said the tall sailor.

Kylon paused a moment.

"Ve ees from de same village," he said; "ve is olt neighbors. Ven ve find 'eem I keel 'eem!"

He continued to mutter, his two companions silent; till, coming soon to the full-rigger's gangway, he followed the tall sailor aboard, the boatswain at his heels.

M*AKAROA*, a land wind on her starboard beam, was booming past Cape Tres Puntas; her six big topsails straining; her main lower topgallant sail, lovely as a bird-wing, luminous in the light of a low and rising moon.

In a locker room beneath her forecastle head, now turned into a hospital, in a bunk against the ship's steel side, lay a man who coughed continually; his face sunken, his eyes glistening in the feeble light of a gimbal-hung lamp.

Beside him, seated upon a sea-chest, sat the wide-shouldered sailor; his eyes fixed upon the sick man's face; as though a friendship, a mutual understanding, existed between them.

Bending over, his massive head above his comrade's frail chest:

"I keel 'eem! I keel 'eem!" said he.

The bosun appeared in the doorway.

"Kylon, I wants to speak to ye," said he.

Kylon, his eyes as April weather, flickering with uncertain lights, his chin thrust forward, stared up at the bosun.

"You come out 'ere; I wants to speak to ye," said the bosun again.

Looking again at the face of his comrade, Kylon, rising, followed the bosun to the deck.

"Leave that pore feller in peace, can't ye? Can't ye see his time is nigh? Tell yer troubles to me or to some other o' the lads, but leave *him* be!" said the bosun, a hand upon the little man's shoulder.

"Ven I finds 'eem I keel 'eem," murmured Kylon, looking up into the bosun's face.

"That ain't none o' my business," said the bosun.

The sea roared past the *Akaroa's* railing-top; the moon lighting ship and sea with a chilly and mysterious glow.

"You come to th' fo'csle an' I'll play ye a game o' cards," said the bosun.

The sick man lay upon his checkered pillow-cover.

Upon a box beside his pillow was such food as dying seamen were nourished upon in the Liverpool ships—pantile, dipped in salt water, then heated a moment in the galley oven; thus swollen to thrice its natural size; beside it a spoonful of tinned marmalade.

Over the high doorsill, without which water lapped to and fro, there stepped a little shriveled sailor, his body all lashed up in oilskins, a stubby pipe between his lips; his beady eyes bright below a black sou'wester's brim.

Taking the pipe from his lips, he stroked his grizzled mustaches; then, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, his eyes upon the plate of food, sat down upon the sea-chest.

"Ow's it comin'?" said he.

His eyes upon the deck above, the dying sailor made no reply.

"Muffin, eh?" said the old man. "That beats plain 'ardtack, don't it though?"

The other motioned to him to come closer.

"Eh! Wot d'ye want?" asked the old fellow, bending down.

The sick man whispered scarce audible words.

"Kylon? D'ye want *that* crazy bat with ye ag'in, man? Well! That beats me! I'll go get 'im fer ye then," said the little fellow, and, rising, left the gloomy hospital.

The other, his fingers interlocked upon his caved chest, his eyes upon the lamp-flame, waited.

In a moment Kylon took his seat upon the sea-chest.

Neither spoke.

The cry of the offshore wind was clear and high; the weather bitter cold. Suddenly the clamor of the iron bell above the break of the forecastle head echoed along the deck.

The two men stared into each other's eyes.

"Kylon," said the old man, reappearing in the doorway, "it's your wheel."

As a dog trained to long obedience Kylon arose. Turning as he stepped to the deck, extending his crooked fingers toward the dying man, he growled—

"Lak dat!" and so was gone; to steer the flying clipper past the moon's observant face.

A newcomer appeared at the door; a tall, high-booted, sparse-figured man; a sou'wester on his head. His hands in his side pockets, pressing the long oilskin coat he wore against his narrow hips, he entered the hospital; a gray-faced sailor, his cold eyes in keeping with the weather of those dreary latitudes.

He bent over the man in the bunk.

"How d'you feel now?" he asked.

The dying sailor, his fragile hands motionless, his eyes upon his captain's face, made no reply.

"You must eat. You must get up your strength. She needs all hands," said the skipper, his voice the voice of one who must in all things be obeyed.

Looking fixedly at the man in the bunk, he again said:

"You must eat. You must get up your strength."

Then, silently as he came, he was gone.

A sailor, entering the room, rolling a cigaret, lighting it at the lamp chimney, steadying himself as the ship lifted high to the surge of a swell, looked down at the sick man.

"Feelin' pretty bum, are ye? Cheer up, mate! Ye'll soon be well again," he said.

Unused to talking, embarrassed in the presence of that which, so foreign to his own robustness, he did not understand, he turned and left the room; murmuring as he went—

"Cheer up, matey."

The old, grizzled sailor, reentering the room, sat down upon the sea-chest.

"She's holdin' a fair wind, son," he said. "She'll soon be through Le Maire an' footin' it nor'ard again. You'll be all right w'en she rolls into the tropics an' the trade-wind weather."

Putting his pipe into a pocket, he stared at the cold and saggy hardtack beside the dying man's pillow.

" 'Aven't brought ye no supper yet, 'ave they, matey? I'll finish up yer dinner an' 'ave it out o' the way," said he, and, falling hungrily upon the tinned marmalade and the soaked sea-biscuit, quickly finished them.

"Matey!" he exclaimed, the plate empty upon the upended box, and sat a moment regarding the man in the bunk. "Matey," he whispered, bending toward the other. "I been a-follerin' the sea since I was that 'igh," and, so saying, held his hand a couple of feet above the deck.

Lighting his pipe, he sat puffing clouds of smoke at the lamp.

"That 'igh," he said again; a world of reminiscence in his voice.

The sick man's eyes upon his face, he held his pipe at arm's length, gazing at it and at the little wisps of smoke that floated up from its age-blackened bowl.

"There's wot I've got to show fer it—jest that there pipe," said he.

Unheard by either, a newcomer entered the room—a pig-tailed Chinaman, yellow, serene and shrunken, as though an idol come to life were on the sea.

"Stooard," said the old sailor, suddenly aware of the presence of the Chinaman, " 'ow long 'ave you been with this 'ere ship?"

"T'lee year. Heap good ship," replied the steward.

"Wot 'ave ye got to show fer it?" queried the old sailor.

"No *sabe* show," replied the steward.

Placing a plate of food upon the box, he looked at the man in the bunk.

"Allee same supper," he said.

The dying man was motionless.

"W'y don't you sometimes give *us* beans too, stooard? We likes beans," said the old sailor, looking at the plate of cold boiled pork—a little pile of beans beside it.

"Ketch 'em sick, ketch 'em beans. No ketch 'em sick, no ketch 'em beans," replied the steward. "I t'ink allee same die soon," he added, a careless interest in his voice.

The wind was increasing; the noise of the sea deeper—a long, uneasy roar; water swirling to and fro upon the deck without the hospital.

The steward left them.

"There's your supper, matey," said the old sailor.

A whistle, followed by a sharp command, shrilled along the deck.

"Th' mate's a-goin' to take off that flyin' jib," said the old man, rising and going to the door.

"There's yer supper, matey," he said; looking about as he stepped into the cold sea upon the main deck.

Strong voices, the rattle of gear and the flap of a sail were faint upon the night.

A voice, close to the hospital, bellowed:

"Make her fast," and then, "Coil those ropes up and hang 'em on their pins."

The mate, framed for a moment in the open doorway, stared at the dying sailor; then was gone to watch the *Akaroa* down the blowing night.

An ordinary seaman looked in.

Stepping over the sill, water dripping from his oilskins, his cheeks ruddy with the glow of youth, he stared at the face upon the checkered pillow; then at the plate of pork and beans beside him.

"I wisht *I* was sick," said he.

"Are ye goin' to eat that ther' scoff, old-timer?" he asked.

There was no reply.

"Does it 'urt, old-timer?"

The dying man's face was expressionless.

Listening a moment, gazing at the blue-white pillow, he picked up the plate of food and was gone.

MEN in the fo'csle, looking up as he entered, seeing the plate of food in his hands, stared at him inquisitively.

"You gone an' stole from a man wot's dyin'!" cried one.

" 'E wasn't a-goin' to eat it; 'e said 'e wasn't. 'E says to me: 'You 'ave it, Biffin. You're welcome to it. It seems like I can't eat it,' " said the ordinary seaman.

"I believe you're lyin'," replied the other. "I'd 'ave to be dead if I couldn't eat pork an' beans off Stiff."

Unconscious of the men about him, the young sailor devoured the pork and beans.

" 'Appy as if 'e was lappin' up bock beer in th' ol' Martin Vaz, ain't 'e?" said another.

" 'Ow would you like to be Marea's fancy man, eh?" laughed another.

"The mad Finn was 'er fancy man. She was crazy fer 'im an' fer 'is strength," said another.

"A man wot will let a gal turn 'is 'ead ain't got no 'ead," said another.

In the hospital the dying sailor stared at the deck above him.

The old fellow, returning from furling the flying jib, again sat down beside him.

"Eaten it, eh? Well, that's good fer ye! It'll 'elp make ye stout ag'in," he said, seeing that the plate of food was gone.

Above them the forecastle bell crashed noisily upon the night.

"Got to go to muster, matey," he said, rising. "Kylon'll be relieved, an' you will 'ave yer friend back with you ag'in. You eat, son! Eat all the scoff they'll give yer. It'll make yer stout ag'in," he added, stepping to the door.

The sailor in the bunk, rising a little, clutched his breast, choked; then, falling back again, stared at the lamp-flame.

"Wot, matey? Wot is it?" asked the old man, returning to his side.

"I'll tell Kylon to come an' sit with ye, son. He'll be relieved at the wheel now. He kin tell ye what who it is as he's a-goin' to kill."

Through dark and scudding masses of silver-edged cloud the moon shone upon tossed crests about the flying *Akaroa*, her canvas lovely in the pallid light, her masts and spars ashine; a monstrous albatross, whiter than the lifted sea-crests, hovering low above her dipped lee rail.

From the bridge the mate, seeing the great fowl's wings outspread beneath the bellying topsails, spoke to the bosun on the quarterdeck below.

"See that, bos," said he. "That's queer, isn't it? I bet that he'll be dead before the morning comes."

Close to the railing the goney screamed.

Kylon, walking forward from the wheel, the moon bright upon his open face and in his perplexed eyes, stopping, gazed at the low-hovering bird.

Continuing on his way forward, again he sat at the bunkside of his comrade.

Biffin, entering the hospital, placed the empty plate upon the upended box.

" 'Ow is it comin', now?" he asked.

There was no reply.

"Did you 'ear that?" cried Biffin, starting. "She 'as picked up the first o' the Cape 'Orn albatross. 'Ark at 'im screamin'."

Kylon, his eyes on the face on the checkered pillow, made no reply.

"Don't 'e look cold-like?" said Biffin.

Entering the hospital the mate bent over the sailor in the bunk.

"Biffin, go tell Sails to come here," he said.

Biffin, leaving the room, returned in a moment with the sailmaker. Meeting the eye of the sailmaker as he entered the room, the mate nodded.

"Use number one topsail canvas, Sails," he said, and to Biffin added, "Give Sails what help he needs," and then was gone.

"We'll raise him out an' lay him on the deck, so I can get at my sewing there," said the sailmaker. "You take 'is feet an' I will take 'is head."

Together, Kylon standing staring up at the cold face, they lifted the sailor from his bunk; laying him upon the deck planks; the sail-maker leaving the dim-lighted hospital to fetch a roll of canvas for his shrouding.

"I can't stick this 'ere," said Biffin. "I'm a-goin' on deck."

" 'Ow is 'e comin'?" asked the old sailor as the ordinary seaman entered the fo'csle. "Is crazy Kylon with him?"

"He's gone," said Biffin.

The wind roared; black-furrowed rollers crashing by; the moon resplendent on the moaning sea.

"He's gone, eh?" said the old sailor, looking about him at the faces of his shipmates.

They looked at one another, questioning.

"It's blowin' up," said one.

No one spoke.

From just within the doorway Biffin stared at the old man.

"W'en will we whack 'is dunnage out?" he asked.

The old man, his bare head bald and shiny, his pipe in one hand, stood barefooted on the deck.

"Wot do we say, mates?" he asked.

"It's blowin' up," said one.

"Will we whack out 'is dunnage now?" asked Biffin.

"You 'old yer peace, lad. 'Tain't no time fer yer ter speak," said a black-bearded sailor and, looking to the old man, added:

"You be th' oldest 'and 'ere. You whack it out."

The old man looking from one to another; each nodded acquiescence.

"You lad! You give me a 'and to fetch 'is sea-chest to the fo'csle," said the black-bearded sailor.

Hearing their entry, Sails, kneeling beside the body, cold on new topsail canvas, looked up and, the black-bearded man nodding toward the chest, drew aside that they might pass; gently closing the dead man's eyes and drawing the edges of the canvas across his face as they bent to bear the chest away.

Carrying it to the fo'csle, they laid it down between the chocks where it had stood before the sick man was given the little locker-room for his own dwelling-place.

The bosun looked into the fo'csle.

"You had best get Kylon, boys," he said. "He was the pore feller's chum."

"Aye! That is so," said a sailor, "fetch Kylon, some one."

"There was summat atween them two," said another.

"That pore feller knowed the man as stole mad Kylon's gal away from 'im," another said.

Kylon and Biffin entered the fo'csle together. Kylon, his hair all blowy in the sea wind, his April eyes moon-glimmered, looked at them all.

"A woman turned 'is 'ead," said one.

" 'E 'ad a good chum there," said another.

"That there goney is a-waitin' to see wot's in the chest, ain't 'e?" said young Biffin, turning to stare through the open door at the albatross hovering about the rail without.

"They say as dead sailors' sperrits goes into the sea-birds," said one.

Kylon, looking where the sailors looked, waved a hooky hand at the white bird.

"Lak dat!" he growled, the moon upon his open face.

"Let's whack the dunnage out an' be done, sons," said the old man, the sailors gathering about as he bent to raise the lid of the sea-chest.

"Ain't she a beauty, though?" cried one.

" 'E's done that in many a tropic dogwatch, mates," said another.

"'E was a fancy sailor in his day, 'e was," another said.

Mingling, the moonbeams and the lamplight gleamed upon a tall three-skysail clipper painted upon the under side of the lid of the dead sailor's chest; her skysails set, blue sea all about her; bright flags flaunting the wind at her most slender mast-heads; white round her bow.

" 'E was a fancy sailor, 'e was, in 'is day," said the last speaker.

The old man reached down into the chest.

" 'Ere is a blue guernsey like wot they makes along the Devon coasts," he said, lifting a hand-knitted guernsey for them all to see.

" 'Oo gets a guernsey, mates?" he asked.

"You 'ad best save that, old-timer. 'Twill 'elp to keep you warm," said one.

"Wot do ye say, mates?" asked the old man.

"You 'ave it," said another.

"Is that all Sir Garney-O with you, sons?" he asked.

His shipmates nodding assent, the old man tossed the guernsey into his bunk.

" 'Oo wants this 'ere?" he asked, lifting a battered sundowner hat.

"Give that to young Biffin," said one. " 'Twill 'elp to keep 'is 'ead cool."

The old man looking curiously at young Biffin, they laughed.

"You kin 'ave that, son," he said, tossing the sundowner into the lad's bunk.

"That ain't no use to no one," said Biffin.

"You 'ad 'is last scoff, didn't yer? D'yer want everythink?" asked a sailor, scowling at the lad.

"Kylon ought to 'ave 'is pick, boys," said the bosun.

"Aye! That is so," said the old man. "Kylon, do you 'ave any use fer this?" he added, lifting a pair of faded dungarees.

" 'E's a-starin' at 'is old chum's sperrit," said a sailor. "I'll 'ave them dungarees."

Tossing the dungarees into the speaker's bunk, the old man bent to lift the tray in the top of the chest; his shipmates gathering about to look beneath it.

" 'E didn't 'ave much, did 'e?" said one.

"Did y'ever see a sailor wot did 'ave anythink?" said another.

"The crimps gets it all," said one.

"Aye! The crimps an' the gals," said another.

"See if—you can't find somethin' fer Kylon. Kylon was 'is chum," said the bosun.

" 'Ere is a marlinspike an' a ball o' tarred spunyarn—'ere is 'is fid, an' palm an' needle. I reckon 'e must 'a' been bosun o' some ship sometime," said the old man.

" 'Oo wants that there ship's gear?" he asked, looking at the spunyarn, the spike and the fid upon the table.

No one spoke.

He lifted a pair of socks, a sheath knife, an old belt, a pair of scissors, laying them all on the table; the sailors fingering them; passing them from man to man.

"That's the lot," said the old man.

"Wot's that there bit o' canvas? Maybe there's a summat wrapped in that," said one of them, looking into the emptied chest.

"Open it up," said the bosun as the old man lifted a folded piece of canvas, tied with ropeyarn.

"Don't that there smell good, eh?" said young Biffin, edging beside the old man.

" 'Is gal give that to 'im," said another. "You kin smell the scent an' stuff as they uses."

"Pore feller! A gal couldn't be no use to 'im," said another.

"Nor 'im to no gal," another answered.

"I wisht we was all in that old Martin Vaz," said Biffin.

"You ain't the only one," said the bosun.

"Gals ain't no use. You 'ad best leave 'em alone," muttered the old man, untying the ropeyarn from the canvas.

" 'Ere you are, Kylon. You ain't got nothin', an' this be all that's left," he said, passing the package to Kylon, who, in the doorway, was gazing into the moonlight; the goney hovering to and fro above the deep-dipping rail, waiting for food.

Turning, his big eyes growing suddenly soft, a sort of wonder creeping into them, his nostrils dilating, Kylon took the package.

"Vot you iss say?" he asked, his voice become serene.

"It's yours, old man," said the bosun. "It's yours from your dead chum."

Kylon, staring at the package in his hand, untied the ropeyarn with gentle fingers, his savagery suddenly tamed.

The mate passed by, stopping a moment to look into the fo'csle; then, as he noticed the hovering albatross, saying to the bosun—

"Bos, remember what I said to you—?—that he'd be dead before the morning came."

The albatross uttered a long scream.

"He's hungry. I'll tell doctor to throw him a dollop of pork fat as I pass by the galley," said the mate.

A YELL rang out; a great, deep-throated shriek; startling every man in the fo'csle.

Kylon, the package fallen from his fingers, his hair wind-blown, the full moon shining in his open face, his eyes upon the great white albatross, sprang to the deck.

His hooky hands outstretched toward the bird, he leaped above the low-dipped railing.

"Lak dat! Lak dat!" he shrieked.

The sea, the moon agleam upon its mystery, lapped in above the rail; a monstrous white albatross hovering swift astern above two upreaching, hooky hands.

Shouting, cursing at an instant of delay, men rushed to brace and boat-fall.

From the break of the poop, beneath which, at the boat-falls, waiting sailors stood waist-deep in moony water, a tall figure bending toward them spoke in a voice serene and cold—

"There's nothing to be done—not in this wind and sea, men."

Reentering the fo'csle, a black-bearded sailor stooped to lift an open package from the deck, and, laying it upon the table, turned its loose wrappings back.

From the table a girl, a mass of bright blond hair piled high upon her lovely head, smiled up at them.

"They was both on 'em 'er fancy men," said the black-bearded sailor.

# HUNTING OF WILD CATTLE NO SINECURE

## by Lewis Appleton Barker

THE term, buccaneer, or as it was then spelled *Bucanier*, gained its rise from the previous occupation of those who through adverse circumstances and the hostility of the Spanish, later became sea-rovers. These, who were principally English, and next in number French, had originally gained their livelihood by hunting the wild cattle of the Caribbean Islands, and selling the skins, tallow and beef thereof, the operation of curing the same having been called by the Carib Indians, the *boucan*.

By 1665, the English hunters had so greatly thinned the numbers of this game that it had become dangerous for a single man to hunt them, or even to venture through the savannas, so desperate and vicious had they become. Indeed, it was an excellent sport, exciting enough to suit the taste of the most ambitious sportsman of today, and comparing favorably with most big game hunting of late periods.

Once having been shot at, an old bull never forgot the attack, and was thereafter ever ready to offer battle, the whole herd often drawing up in array to defend themselves. Although Captain William Dampier is one of the most veracious and unpretending of historians, given rather to diminishing than to exaggerating the dangers he had encountered and the wonders he had witnessed, his account of the tactics of these wild cattle borders almost on the marvelous. The van was led by the old bulls, behind whom ranged the cows, the rear being brought up and guarded by the younger males. The embattled front of the old warriors was opposed to the hunters, at whatever point they sought to break through the line, wheeling round in every direction to face their enemy. The aim of the latter, therefore, was rather a single animal detached from the herd, than a general or open attack.

The English invariably conducted the chase with firearms, but the Spaniards had a method peculiar to themselves, and worthy of note. It was termed "hocksing," or "houghing," and from the practise of years, the "hocksers," so-called, had become very expert and dexterous in their art. They were always mounted on good horses, which had been as early and as diligently trained to their occupation as had their masters, knowing full well when to advance and retreat with advantage. The hunter was armed with a "hocksing-iron," in the shape of a crescent about seven inches long, with an exceedingly sharp edge. This was attached firmly to a fourteen-foot pole, which was held extended forward over the horse's head after the manner of a lance.

Dashing swiftly upon his prey from the rear, he strikes, and seldom fails in hamstringing the animal, upon which the horse instantly wheels to the left, avoiding all chance of attack by the wounded bull. If the stroke has not quite severed all the sinews, the unfortunate quarry soon completes the work himself in his attempt to leap forward. Thus, limping and exhausting himself more and more, he is once more approached by his pursuer, who now attacks him from the front, striking the iron into the knee of one of the forelegs. As a rule, this is sufficient, the beast usually dropping to earth, whereupon the hunter dismounts, and with a sharp-pointed knife strikes so dexterously and deeply just behind the horns, that at one stroke the head drops as if severed from the neck, and the end is come. Remounting, the conqueror is off after new game, while the skinners proceed to remove the hide.

# WHEN THE SUN SAT DOWN

by Georges Surdez

A Complete Novelette

*Author of "The White Man's Way," "Out of the East," etc.*

SUB-LIEUTENANT PELLER, on the promenade deck of the *Opale*, lighted his after-lunch cigar, leaned on the railing and contemplated the little west coast port of Cotonou, the main gateway of the French African colony of Dahomey. The panorama was pleasing; the usual luxuriant vegetation; the white, red-roofed bungalows; the long wharf, spanning the surf on spidery iron legs and jutting into the gulf.

Peller's interest was justified; Cotonou, although now but a stopping-place for him on his way to France, was familiar territory. It was here that he had first landed with the Dodds expedition several years before, a private in the Marine Infantry. He recalled the sharp fighting on the march to Abomey, King Behanzin's capital, the fiery Amazons, the spectacle of the African Light Infantry and the Foreign Legion going to the attack. How far behind him that seemed!

He looked down at the narrow gold lace, a single stripe circling his cuff, and smiled. Was this sufficient reward for years of danger? Some might not think so. He did. Living was keener when insecure. Since that hard campaign in the Benin, others had followed; the Sudan, the southern Sahara, the Chad, the Congo. Then, more recently, his stay on the Ubangi. But lately commissioned, he had six months' leave before him, six solid months of rest, and already he was feeling regret at leaving Africa.

"Bah—" he murmured. "I'm still the same; a few wrinkles, one or two scars. But I'm traveling first-class instead of deck. That's the most pleasing achievement."

It must be noted that the French Republic, with due consideration for hierarchy, sends her men to the colonial wars with various degrees of comfort. The private travels steerage, the non-coms second-class and the officers, first. That is as it should be. But one who has known the first two, appreciates the last.

A vague desire to land, to stroll through the streets of Cotonou came to him. But he shrugged his shoulders. What was the use? He knew no one. As a private, among hundreds of others, he had had no opportunity to make acquaintances during his stay.

A voice suddenly hailed him from below.

"Lieutenant—I savvy this place."

He looked down.

In the waist of the ship stood a group of negroes, conspicuous among them a number of *tirailleurs* in uniform. An Aboure private, Yatera, by name, had called out. True, there was nothing strange in the negro's recognition of the port; Yatera hailed from Assinie on the Ivory Coast and probably had roamed over the entire coastline when a youth. Peller acknowledged the information courteously. He knew that the black soldiers were but children in mind, and Yatera, elated at thus arriving near home, was but manifesting his joy to his superior.

"You'll soon be home, all of you," Peller said.

Corporal Bo Diare and Samake grinned in their turn. Yes, they soon would reach Senegal though not without a long inland journey, Samake to the Niger village where he had enlisted, and Bo Diare to his home in Sokolo, where he intended to join his Ouolof brothers in trading. Peller felt regret at parting from these men; together they had seen much, endured much. The blacks' devotion had met all tests, and Peller prided himself on always having done his best for his men. It was also gratifying to remember that the three had insisted on embarking for leave on the same vessel to be nearer their white chief, whom they had known as a non-com, and rejoiced to see arrive at a commission.

Yatera pointed toward shore, and called out again—

"See, lieutenant—boat coming!"

There were several surf boats approaching, propelled by the excited paddlers, loaded with passengers and freight for the *Opale*, and with visitors to the ship. The arrival of a passenger steamer in a west coast port serves as an occasion to see new faces, make new passing acquaintances.

Peller moved to the top of the ladder, and watched the arrivals curiously, searching for a uniform. Soldiers are brothers when they meet, and Peller was anxious to treat some one to a drink. Long periods of loneliness develops this longing in men.

From below, Yatera was chattering in Aboure, calling to the paddlers, for there were among them those who bore the tribal tattooing. He seemed to revel in the sound of his own tongue after a long sojourn among negroes of other races. With similar eagerness, Samake the Bambara, and Bo Diare the Ouolof, sought out men of their race, who came in charge of cargo, native assistants in the shore factories. And Peller envied them.

"Hey, Peller!"

He leaned over the rail and looked down into the surf-boat from which the voice seemed to have risen, scanning the sunburned faces under the white helmets.

"Here—here!"

At last he located his man, a tall fellow in a lieutenant's uniform, bearded and inclined to be stout, with the cross of the Legion of Honor on his tunic. Who was he? Peller searched his memory, passed in review the faces of his friends in the colonial army. He failed to recall, although he felt he had seen the green-gray eyes somewhere before.

"Hello," he returned weakly.

The man grasped the rope guide of the ladder, leaped lightly from the dancing craft to the landing, and ascended, four steps at a time. He came forward with outstretched hand.

"Glad to see you, old man, glad to see you," he volunteered.

Peller, still puzzled, shook the proffered hand wordlessly.

"Don't you know me?" exclaimed the other. "Daniaux, Daniaux of the First *Tirailleurs*. By ——! If any one had told me you'd forget me, when we were at Kissidougou!"

Kissidougou, Daniaux— Peller flushed. He recalled the operations near the Liberian frontier, a hot sun, no water, and a tall chap sharing the last of a canteen with him.

Daniaux—Sergeant Daniaux, who had bayoneted the Malinke about to cut Peller's neck open—did he remember him?

"Forgive me," he offered. "It's the 'bush,' I guess."

Daniaux caressed his beard and laughed.

"A fine growth of alfalfa, eh? You'll have to raise one now you're commissioned. It's the style."

Peller laughed in his turn.

"Let's have a drink," he said.

An invitation is never refused in Dahomey, and they made their way to the little barroom of the steamer where they soon faced two tall glasses, yellow vermouth and red cassis blending in agreeable color combination.

"How did you know I was on board?" Peller asked.

"Passenger list, you barbarian!" Daniaux replied. "The purser brought it ashore. Peller, I thought, Peller—must be 'Skinny' Peller of Kissidougou. And here I am."

And Daniaux, irrepressible, launched forth on a narration of his adventures since his last meeting with Peller in Dakar after the Sudan Campaign.

"As for you," he concluded, "you don't need to say a thing. Your post commander on the Ubangi, Captain Monge, is in correspondence with the commander here, and I know all about your business."

He lowered his voice and laid a hand on Peller's sleeve confidentially.

"Come ashore for dinner with me. I have a proposition that may interest you."

"I don't want to leave the army," Peller replied guardedly.

"Who spoke of leaving the army? But I have something for you to do in your line. There's no one like you. Now don't cry out before you hear. You'll thank me on bended knees for giving you such a chance."

Peller hesitated, puzzled.

"What have you got for dinner?" he asked cautiously with a smile.

"Chickens, peas, anything you wish."

"Anything to drink?"

"Everything."

"I accept the dinner. Now tell me the rest."

Daniaux shook his head.

"Wait. Captain Briquet'll tell you all about it. Something that just suits you. Able-bodied, reliable, unmarried—the scheme of a lifetime."

"All right," Peller agreed. "Let's go."

THE dinner was held in Captain Briquet's bungalow.

Beside the captain, Daniaux and Peller, there were three others: Lieutenants Gatel, Murat and Erckmann. Briquet was short, broad-shouldered, with a red complexion and sandy mustaches. Gatel was a very tall, thin fellow, showing traces of recent fever; Murat was of medium size and a jovial chap. Erckmann, an Alsatian, wore spectacles and was rather expressionless.

Chicken and rice, copiously drenched with peanut-sauce, the famous *foutou*, the dish *par excellence* of the African West Coast, helped down by a velvety Pomard. Erckmann, however, drank beer. Then a bottle of champagne was opened, another, a third, and pledges were offered. The proposition announced by Daniaux had not yet been made, and Peller was beginning to have an unpleasant premonition.

For him, a newly-hatched sub-lieutenant, to be dined and wined to such an extent there must be an ulterior motive of considerable importance. The captain's obvious kindness was a trifle overdone. Although Peller hesitated to consider the intentions of a host, he was certain that the favor asked of him would be hard to meet.

The lieutenants glanced at him curiously, from time to time. Briquet, his tunic unbuttoned at the throat for comfort, regarded him steadily. Daniaux was a trifle nervous, diffident toward his superior, apologetic toward Peller, as if he regretted having brought him ashore.

Erckmann, who, Peller suddenly noticed, carried one hand in bandages, was the least nervous of the group, and ate his dinner conscientiously. Perhaps the Teutonic strain in him made for this calmness.

"I understand that you are a resolute fellow," Briquet began, at last, and then stilled Peller's attempt at modesty with a gesture. "Daniaux's told me, and Monge's letters from Bakkasu say the same. And you're not a stickler for the strictly correct ways of the army, are you?"

"I—" Peller began, then faltered and was silent.

Yes, he had broken regulations several times during his career when occasion seemed to warrant.

"That's all right," Briquet assured him. "All of us are of the same mind. African service is not Continental service, and a man must have a little latitude in the choice of methods employed to arrive at a given objective."

"Other places—other methods!" put in Lieutenant Gatel.

"In love and war—" Murat chimed in, and then became abashed when he saw that the occasion prevented the others from smiling.

Erckmann cleared his throat and drew a conclusion.

"Thoroughness in the execution of duty is a virtue, but as all virtue, may be carried too far."

Then he relapsed into a ponderous silence.

"Now, Lieutenant Peller," said Briquet confidentially. "You and I know that the regulations of this colony are made by civilian lawmakers in Paris."

"Yes, sir."

"And we know that their ignorance is deep. Do you recall the answer made to the demand for labor by an African officer? 'Use elephants,' Paris wrote. 'Hannibal used them, why can't you?' "

Peller grinned.

"True enough. But examples of the sort can not be confined to civilian deputies in Paris. I have seen a report by a famous African army officer, advising the use of night attacks in the Sudan, 'because,' he said, 'negroes are unable to see in the darkness.' "

The listeners laughed politely. Then a silence ensued. Briquet seemed to hesitate.

Daniaux twisted his beard. The Alsatian wiped his glasses.

"You know the situation concerning firearms throughout our colonies," Briquet resumed. "You had trouble with contraband guns in the Ubangi."

"And with some that were not contraband," Peller agreed.

"We have the same situation here. Everything is apparently pacified on the surface. Yet, every once in a while something happens, with a smuggled rifle in a negro's hands. Look——"

He indicated Erckmann's bandages.

"Smashed fingers—Mauser bullet."

"Lately?" Peller asked, surprized.

"Less than a week ago. Erckmann got off easily. But his companion was killed."

"Sergeant Granget," Erckmann put in. "We were fishing, some distance from Afratan, near the Togoland frontier. We had only one boy with us, and were far from thinking of any danger. Granget was leaning over to unhook a fish, when—*pop*—and he fell to the bottom of the canoe. I lay down, but the shooting was repeated several times. My hand was hit. The boy was hurt in the leg."

"Did you reply?" asked Peller.

"Couldn't. We were in a canoe, on a pool. For comfort, we had left our coats and revolvers on the beach. By the time we got there, the others were gone."

"Bad luck," agreed Peller.

"You understand that this can not go on unpunished," Briquet said. "And you noticed that Lieutenant Erckmann said they were near the frontier of Togoland, a German possession."

He paused and glanced sharply at Peller, as if this statement should reveal to the newcomer what was expected of him. Peller did not reply.

"It is evident," Briquet went on, "that those who did the shooting came from over the border and are now safe from us in German territory. We could ask the authorities over there to search out the culprit, but I have more than a suspicion such a course would be useless."

"I presume it would," Peller agreed.

"Captain Monge, your ex-commander, wrote me about a little expedition of yours into Belgian Congo," Briquet said easily, "and I wondered whether you'd be willing to do the same thing here, in an unofficial manner."

Peller smiled.

"I cannot go unless I receive positive orders from you. Of course I can not refuse to do what you order."

Daniaux seemed disappointed. Briquet stroked his chin. The others stared at each other. No doubt they had expected that Peller, who had once, compelled by an unusual situation, gone into neutral territory to recover stolen rifles, would leap at a chance to repeat the exploit.

"I can not order such a move," Briquet protested. "It must be done quietly."

"And I should be disavowed in case I should be caught by the Germans?"

"Absolutely, absolutely."

"The Germans do not hamper themselves with fine technicalities in this climate, as we do. If they caught me attempting strong-arm business on their soil they'd probably shoot me."

"Probably."

Peller's anger mounted.

"You ask me, on the way home for leave, to take such a chance?"

"You'd be serving the army as well as in combat," Briquet assured him.

"But how am I to capture several men, whom I do not know, whom I have not seen, and whom you do not even know yourself!"

"We're not after the actual culprits. It's the instigator of the shooting. A movement of the sort always has a leader."

"Quite true," Peller agreed. "But one negro is as hard to find as ten."

"A little time, of course, is needed," Briquet admitted. "Some of your alloted leave would be devoted to the task, it's true. But without making an engagement of any sort, retaining the privilege of refusal, will you listen to a brief outline of the situation."

Peller nodded.

"The situation since King Behanzin of Dahomey—" Briquet interrupted himself—"You have heard of him, no doubt."

Peller, it is to be feared, smiled in a superior manner.

"I was here during the conquest," he said simply.

"Since Behazin was dethroned, the countryside has been almost quiet. Some months ago, the commanders of the outpost near Togoland became aware of sullenness among the natives. Scattered attacks occured. The natives were armed with modern rifles, Mausers, Winchesters. Some of these pieces we could account for; they were sold right here, in Cotonou, or in Portò Novo, or in Abomey, by unscrupulous traders. But the bulk manifestly arrived from Togoland.

"Now, the manner in which the attacks were conducted, made a central directing power evident. On the quiet, we sent out spies. All they could gather was that the natives were inspired by an unknown leader, whom they called Owo. He is a bit of a prophet, a fetishist, and has a great line of talk. Some day in the near future, at high noon, all the Frenchmen will be massacred, and Dahomey will be independent! All bunk, of course, and the wiser natives know they can never rid themselves of our rule, and have no wish to. They are more prosperous, better protected, than at any time under native chiefs. But try to tell a bush villager that the Prophet is wrong!"

"Have you a description of this Owo fellow?" Peller asked.

"No. We hear the usual stories; he is bigger than any man in the vicinity, clever, and helped by all the various trustworthy fetish gods."

Peller pondered, and then spoke—

"One thing is certain."

"What?"

"That Owo is not of this country. If he exists at all, he is a negro from some other colony."

"Why do you think that?" Briquet asked.

"A negro from this vicinity would have been known to the villagers from childhood. They would have seen him as a boy and lack trust in him, recalling that he was as all other men. Moreover, through gaining a following, he would have gained enemies jealous of his prestige, and you would have willing information about him. That no man is a prophet in his own land is a very true saying."

"With exceptions," Briquet smiled. "But in this case, I believe you're right. The same thought seems to have occurred to some of the commanders in the threatened region. They investigated all the foreign-born negroes, those from the Gold Coast, from Togoland, and farther away. But no real information could be gathered."

"He probably does not live on the French side," Peller suggested. "He comes, does his little dirt, and goes off again."

"And in Togoland he unavoidably has enemies. You could locate him."

Peller laughed.

"Why not some one from here to do the job?"

Briquet paled slightly. Daniaux laid a restraining hand on his sleeve. Peller apologized immediately.

"If you'd thought before that remark you'd have found out the reason for our speaking," Briquet went on. "Here there are only a limited number of white men, known by sight, each and every one, to a thousand natives. You know that the natives circulate considerably; such and such a trader roams between here and Togoland several times a year. Any officer from Dahomey would inevitably be recognized and tipped off to the German authorities. That's why we need a stranger to turn the trick."

FRENCH WEST AFRICA
IVORY COAST
GOLD COAST
NIGERIA
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN SUDAN
EQUATORIAL AFRICA
KAMERUN
GRAND BASSAM
GULF OF GUINEA
EQUATOR
FRENCH CONGO
BELGIAN CONGO
BRIT. EA
TANG. TERR.
ATLANTIC OCEAN
PORTUGESE WEST AFRICA
RHODESIA
SOUTHWEST AFRICA
BECHUANALAND
PORTUGUESE
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA
CAPE TOWN
AFRICA
SCALE

"That's right," said Peller. "Again I apologize. And I accept."

"I knew he would," Daniaux said.

"How am I to enter Togoland? What reasons shall I give? What papers can I show?"

"All that has been arranged. We have some trustworthy natives to help you."

"And if I'm caught, captain, how will I explain my standing as a French officer?"

Briquet smiled again.

"You sign your resignation from the army. I accept it. A little unorthodox, true; but if you come back, I'll tear it up. If not——"

After all, if he failed, whether he resigned or not, would have little importance. He knew Germans. Wonderful fellows socially, but utterly unable to take a joke in the matter of administration.

Briquet explained his plan. Peller made some objections, which were met.

"I'll get men from Dhenli, the old chief on the border. He's an old friend of mine," Briquet announced. "He has a great hold over his men and they'll stick to you to the end. I will have one or two *tirailleurs* in disguise to go with you as gun-bearers; you may have use for them."

"I have several of my own *tirailleurs*, on their way home with their discharges. They are not known here, and they may decide to come with me."

"That's even better," Briquet agreed.

"We'll supply you with money," suggested Daniaux. "You'll need it."

Briquet signaled for another magnum of champagne, and raised his glass.

"To you, Peller!" he said.

Pelled hesitated, then picked up his own glass and drained it.

"To me!" he agreed. "I'll need it."

PELLER returned to the *Opale* for his baggage. In the confused arrival of new passengers, his action was not noticed.

Samake, Bo Diare and Yatera were easily located, still in the same spot, playing cards with the boatmen from Cotonou who were awaiting the final whistle to go back to the wharf. Peller beckoned, and they obeyed immediately, came forward and saluted.

"Listen, boys, I want to ask a favor."

"Yassah," Bo Diare assented.

He usually acted as spokesman for the group, his French being more fluent than that of the tall Bambara or the Aboure.

"I have a little job to do ashore. Some one will pay you one franc a day and all your keep for the time you are in Dahomey. There may be fighting."

"Yassah," Bo Diare agreed, enthusiastically, both at the mention of the one franc pay and the possibility of a fight.

"But you'll have to lay aside your uniforms and wear *boubous*, like the other blacks here."

This patently annoyed the ex-*tirailleurs*. They were proud of their medals and uniforms, and counted upon them to make an impression. They nevertheless assented.

"Samake, thy wives can go on to Senegal by this ship, or they can go ashore here to wait for thy return."

"They stay for this ship," replied the Bambara, who was accompanied by two wives and several children. "They wait for me at Dakar."

"That's best. And all the time we are ashore, I no be Lieutenant Peller. I no be lieutenant at all. I be Monsieur Heimotz."

"What be Heimotz?" queried Bo Diare.

"My name, in Dahomey. I no be soldier here. You don't tell any one I ever was. Savvy?"

This puzzled the three *tirailleurs* more than a little, but they assented without further question.

"We savvy, massa. You be Monsieur Heimotz."

"Now, Samake, give thy women this," said Peller, and handed the corporal several gold coins. "And all three of you take your bags and come down in the surf-boat."

"*MEH mo Tirailleur veni*—I am a bull *tirailleur* ——" sang Yatera, at dusk three days later.

The Aboure, thinking of his homeland—Togoland and Dahomey being almost identical in physical feature with the Ivory Coast—was elated. The cloth *boubou*, leaving his muscular legs and arms bare, reminded him of years before, when, as a youth, he had paddled across the lagoons near Assinie.

Bo Diare, who sat in the bow of the canoe, glanced cautiously at the paddlers, and whispered tensely:

"Shut up quick. No be *tirailleur* here."

Yatera remembered the oft-repeated demand for caution, and shifted to a boat-song more in keeping with his assumed identity. Samake, smoking a short clay pipe that baked his thick lips, gave a grunt of scorn. Yatera's behavior, since his arrival in the region, had been that of a youth rather than a seasoned *tirailleur*. Samake did not realize, that he, too, would become childish at a reminder of his own home.

Peller, alias Monsieur Heimotz, occupied a steamer-chair in the stern of the long craft. Paddling in time to the monotonous chant of the steersman, the boatmen, borrowed from Dhenli, the border chief, were lost in dreams of their own, and Yatera's words had not been noticed.

Peller, with his three followers and crew of twelve men, had left Grand Popo in the morning, on the last lap of the journey to Togoland. The day before, the hardest stretch of the water route had been accomplished, the navigation opposite the opening to the gulf, called "King's Mouth," where the swells from the sea were powerful, and severely shook the flimsy boat. In order to keep his identity secret Peller had decided to make the trip from Cotonou by canoe, instead of taking the lagoon-steamer, *General Dodds*. On board the passenger vessel his purpose might have caused curiosity, and his arrival reported to the German post on the Haho Lagoon. But now he would arrive unheralded.

Another canoe, trailing behind, was loaded with baggage, all marked with the initials, E. H., bearing underneath, in neatly stenciled white letters: Lausanne, Switzerland. Peller was clad in the conventional whites of African traders, with a gray helmet shading his face. The mustache was gone.

The headman of the paddlers suddenly inquired.

"We stop before sundown?"

"No. Keep on until we reach Zondocodji."

"Yassah."

Night fell. The moon rose over the trees, spilling white light over the limpid lagoon surface.

The canoes, ghost-like, flitted onward.

Fires on the banks cast red reflections, shooting across, and silhouetting the half-naked paddlers. Faint hails from the shore were answered by the crew. Dimly, the pounding of the surf over the tongue of sandy beach separating the lagoon from the sea, could be heard, like far-off thunder. From time to time, came the splashing of fish.

"That be *capitaine*," Yatera informed Peller. *Capitaine* was the name given all large fish by the natives.

Bo Diare chose to discover in this casual information another reference to their previous status as soldiers of the French Republic, as *capitaine* smacks of the military. He uttered a warning grunt.

Yatera answered belligerently—

"You make palaver all time."

Bo Diare, who was a corporal, had been Yatera's superior for years, and resented the reply. The low muttered conversation between the blacks grew tense. A new spirit of independence seemed to have been absorbed by the private with the familiar atmosphere of his native land. Bo Diare, restrained from evoking his standing as a non-commissioned officer, yet wishing to quell this unheard of rebellion, waxed sarcastic, cast reflections upon Yatera's standing among the *tirailleurs*, and indeed among blacks in general. To which, Yatera, who made up in brevity what he lacked in eloquence, replied with a single word:

"*Vavré!*" which means "small woman."

And the feud was born.

Peller ordered silence when it became likely that they would pass from words to more active arguments. He did not justify Yatera, but he feared a break in which the coast native would be met by the opposition of the two corporals, who stood together as representatives of anciently noble races in contrast with the low-born Yatera. Away from barracks and the routine of outposts, old animosities rose between these *tirailleurs* of different races and religions.

Yatera, although at one time converted to the faith of the white men, was now a backslider. Together with the tiny cross given him by a priest years before, he wore around his neck many fetishes of strictly pagan significance. Bo Diare and Samake were Mohammedans, and their fetishes were one and all proved relics. So that Yatera stood a self-convicted barbarian before his two brothers-in-arms. In action, under the command of a uniformed officer, the three would have been a unit. Peller recalled with astonishment, that since the abandonment of the gold-laced tunic, and the donning of civilian clothes, even he had fallen in the estimation of his three close followers.

As a non-com and then as an officer, he had been a fashion of demi-god to them. As a civilian, he was just a white "massa." So much do exterior things count in primitive eyes. He wondered if he had acted wisely in using these three men. Perhaps he would have been more fortunate had he accepted the proffered *tirailleurs* from the Cotonou garrison, who were newer in service. His three *tirailleurs* had fallen in their own estimation through the discarding of uniforms and red *chechia*,* for the native *boubou*. He found it hard to recognize the men who had followed him on the Ubangi.

"Bo Diare!"

"Sah?"

"Come back here, away from Yatera."

---

*Arab skull-cap with tuft.

Bo Diare cautiously made his way between the paddlers, and squatted at the feet of his chief.

"I order thee to cease quarreling with the private," Peller said.

"Yassah, but he say things about me in his own tongue."

"Forget it."

"Yassah."

Peace reigned once more, and Peller found time to worry about what was to come.

A LIGHT far ahead, a trifle to the right.

More lights; one red, the other green, motionless, close to the dark shore. Peller regarded the colored reflections rippling down into the dark waters, and wondered.

"Zondocodji," announced the headman.

"What are those lights, the red and the green, there?"

Peller indicated. The native followed the direction of his shadowy arm.

"Boat," he replied.

"What boat?"

"Big boat—big guns."

A gunboat, a detail "forgotten" in the information given him by Briquet. The presence of a gunboat meant the presence of armed troops. His men, armed with old shotguns, could not resist the fire of good military pieces. If his mission became suspected he would be caught, inevitably. A gunboat, probably on the lookout for the very thing he was attempting, an incursion into German territory after gun traders! He cursed himself for accepting the mission, cursed the ties of friendship and the foolishness of pride.

"What name?" he asked of the headman.

"*Ooenbug.*"

Only a man skilled in gathering the real meanings of words from native pronunciation could have made out *Wissenburg.* Peller had a general knowledge of all the gunboats of various nations in African waters. He searched his memory, recalled an old magazine: *Wissenburg*, stern-wheeler, armed with two large cannon, four quick firers, vague figures of tonnage and length.

"*Wissenburg,*" he mused. "How tactful! The gunboat stationed nearest a French colony, named after a French defeat!"

Then he realized that the names of French vessels also were commemoration of other nations' humiliation, and he smiled. What a potent thing was national pride! Universal peace seemed an impossible dream. When France built a battle-ship called *Waterloo*, when Germany launched an iron-clad with *Jena* in gold letters across her stern, understanding between nations might begin. Until then——

They were within two or three hundred yards of the craft, the outline of which could plainly be discerned, the disproportionate funnel and a single stumpy mast rising high.

"Who dat be?" a voice called out in English.

Peller smiled again. Instead of the expected call of "*Werda?*"—this English phrase. Of all tongues, English was the most easily assimilated by the natives. And all white men in the tropics are familiar with pidgin-English, or bush-talk.

"White man!" he called.

The native soldier on guard on the deck was evidently satisfied.

"Go on," he said.

Peller's canoes slid wide of the stern, and made for the beach before Zondocodji, where he intended to spend the night, before starting his investigations in the morning.

But a lantern swung across the deck, and the stamping of booted feet on planking could be heard.

"Who are you?"

The voice was that of a white man, also speaking English.

"Heimotz, trader."

"Come alongside, and wait for inspection."

"——!" breathed Peller.

There was nothing to do but obey. The two canoes were turned back and brought to the foot of the ladder leading to the deck.

The officer spoke at length in English, far too fluent and complicated for Peller to understand. He waited patiently until the speech was ended, then replied, in French—

"I don't understand."

The voice shifted to a perfect, though guttural French.

"What are you doing in the lagoon at this time of night?"

"It's not ten o'clock yet," Peller apologized.

"Tie up by the other boat, and come on deck."

Peller ordered the canoes fastened by the side of the rowboat at the bottom of the ladder, and advised his men to keep quiet. Then, after making sure that he had his papers in his pocket, he ascended to the deck. He was confronted by a tall, clean-shaven man, clad in whites, without insignia of rank.

"Eugene Heimotz, trader, Swiss," he introduced himself, extending his hand.

"Wilfrid Koenig, Naval Lieutenant, Imperial Navy," said the officer in his turn.

And, either not seeing or pretending not to see, he allowed the new arrival's hand to fall back untouched.

"What have you in the canoes?"

"Personal baggage, lieutenant, and trade-goods."

"What are your intentions? Where are you bound for?"

"I'm bound for Zondocodji. I intend to establish a trading-station."

"You choose a rather strange time to arrive."

"Not of my choice, lieutenant. I didn't want to camp out."

"Does any one ashore know you? Can you be identified?"

"No, but I have my papers."

"Hold the lantern closer," said Koenig to his orderly. Then to Peller, "Bring out your papers."

Peller brought out a birth certificate, a letter stating his age at twenty-eight, proclaiming the fact that he was a bachelor and, as far as the writer knew, of good moral character. It was signed by the president of a Basle export firm, declaring moreover that the bearer was departing for a sojourn in Africa. "Heimotz" also produced a similar letter written in German. Koenig pursed his lips.

"Your nationality and identity are proved," he said. "Apparently. But what are you doing here? Why did you leave Dahomey?"

"I didn't know that—" Peller began with a pretense at indignation.

"We write our own laws here," Koenig informed him.

"I guess I'd better make a clean breast of my case," said Peller, with apparent reluctance. "This is my reason for leaving Dahomey in a hurry."

He handed another paper to Koenig, a printed sheet, which the German officer read through in a low voice.

Decreed by the colonel commanding, of the French colony of Dahomey, grand-officer of the Legion of Honor, according to article 51 of the order of September 7th, 1840, according to the law of the 11th of December, 1849, on the right of the expulsion of foreigners, according to the law of May 29th, 1874, allowing this law to be applied to foreigners in French colonies, according to the law of March 20th, 1892, forbidding, in French Guinea and depending colonies, the importation and sale of modern rifles and revolvers and ammunition for same.

Considering that the firm Heimotz, having trading-posts at Oumbega and Achacpa, where it has always been granted the protection of the French Republic, considering that upon lawful inquest it has been found that this firm, in the greed for gain, has sold arms to unfriendly natives, in detail: 25 Spencers, 5 Snyders, 8 Chassepots, and cartridges, Eugene Heimotz is expulsed from the French territory and his shops closed, until final decision by the Ministry of Colonies in Paris. Porto Novo.

Followed the date, and the signature of the colonel commanding with appropriate seals.

"So that was why you left?" Koenig said with a hint of disgust in his tone. "A dirty business, yours was, for a neutral, a foreigner!"

"One must live, lieutenant."

"There are ways and ways."

"You understand that I did not want to be shipped back home, where I'd have nothing to start with. I'll live here, and trade here."

"You're a fine acquisition for the Colony of Togoland," Koenig declared.

"Finer than you imagine, lieutenant!" Peller said intrepidly. "I work under the orders of a German firm which subsidized me: Godelt, of Hamburg. I drew a salary from them and derived little profit from the sale of guns. The important things was not the price gained from them, but the potentiality for trouble."

"Ah, you were an agent, then?" the German asked.

"Yes."

"That places you in a different light."

He shook hands with Peller cordially.

"I'm sorry I can't put you up on board, but orders are against it at present, and my space is limited. I'll give you a note for a trader, ashore. You may have opportunity to do good work here."

And "Heimotz" departed with a final handshake, found a willing host through the note from Lieutenant Koenig, and went to bed.

"Yes," he decided, before he dropped off to sleep, "I may have a chance to do good work here, but not in exactly the way you figure."

THE next morning he had breakfast in the dining-room of the bungalow assigned to him by the commander of the gunboat. His host, Barth, by name, was a good-natured, stout German, so German that he might have posed for a caricature of the race. He smoked a long-stemmed porcelain pipe, drank beer exclusively, and discoursed at length on commercial matters.

His admiration for his guest was unbounded. He had already heard the name of Heimotz, he declared, and had always wanted to meet the man.

It must be said that the genuine Eugene Heimotz, who was a Swiss from Lausanne, as the inscription on the boxes indicated, had been arrested the week before Peller's arrival in Cotonou. The document bearing the Colonel's signature was genuine. Captain Briquet knowing that the trader, who had in fact been owner of two factories in the upper country, was little known about the coast-line, had merely removed him from the bungalow where he had been put under guard, to a hut in the barrack enclosure, where now two sturdy *tirailleurs* kept watch upon him. There was but one difficulty: the real Heimotz spoke German fluently, and Peller was almost totally ignorant of the tongue, not having gained his commission through military schools where knowledge of the over-Rhine language was required.

Barth, upon Peller's appearance, had greeted him in German. The Frenchman found himself in a bad situation. But he realized, that although Barth had surmised Heimotz to be a German Swiss, he was not certain of the fact. Barth, who formerly had held a post in Konakry, in French Guinea, spoke passable French, and Peller was forced to pretend to be intensely interested in the price of native produce, and the current questions on trade articles.

Peller, who did not know the various grades of palm-oil, found himself embarrassed, replied in monosyllables, and probably would have given himself away, had not Bo Diare created a welcome diversion.

In his new character, that of chief native assistant to a trader, Bo Diare, who had been supplied with money by Daniaux, had not done things by halves. He had purchased a well-fitting white suit, a large sun-helmet, and a magnificent hardwood stick, as well as a pair of russet shoes. All these things he had seen worn by the more prosperous educated negroes in Cotonou, and thought his disguise quite complete. True, the shoes, to the feet accustomed to sandals or bare sole marching, were a trifle uncomfortable, and caused him to wince as he walked, but completed the picture of the perfect black assistant.

Barth caught sight of him, strutting outside, under the envious gaze of the factory workmen. The white suit, helmet and shoes, Bo Diare had kept within his bundle during the canoe trip, unwilling to soil them uselessly. It was some seconds before Peller realized that the native who had so aroused Barth's ire was his own corporal of *tirailleurs*.

"He breaks the rules!" shouted Barth. "He breaks the rules."

"What rules?"

"Natives are not allowed to wear shoes or helmets, or carry canes in this colony!"

"Why not?"

"It's the rules," insisted Barth.

Peller got up and stepped out front to confront Bo Diare.

"Go put that suit and the rest of the rig away, Bo Diare. Wear thy *boubou*."

Bo Diare scanned his attire in surprize.

"He no look good?"

"He look fine," Peller agreed. "But the white men here do not allow it."

"Pow!" scoffed Bo Diare in disgust. "White man's clothing don't make black man white man."

But he obediently went off to change into his *boubou*.

After breakfast, Peller followed Barth on a round of the village, and at last decided upon the bungalow his shop would occupy. Barth offered him opportunity to purchase a partnership in his well-established business. Peller declined, said he would keep by himself, sink or swim, until he could reestablish his connection with the Hamburg firm backing the Heimotz enterprise.

From the baggage canoe was produced a large sign-board, bearing in gold letters on a black field, the caption in English:

EUGENE HEIMOTZ, AFRICAN MERCHANT.

With the help of Bo Diare and Samake, this was hung on the rickety veranda. Then the goods, brought as a mask for

Peller's real purpose, were unbaled. Bo Diare and Samake almost forgot their rôle as tradesmen, in their admiration of the cheap jewelry and steel wares that comprised the stock. Barth looked on with disfavor, and remarked that these two blacks might be all right for a French colony, but that his friend, Heimotz, should hire German-trained shopkeepers, if he hoped to keep his head above water in the vicinity, commercially speaking.

As for Yatera, he had found congenial companionship with two or three Aboures, one of whom he had known as a boy. Not sharing with Samake and Bo Diare Moslem sobriety, he partook largely of the contents of a square-faced bottle of gut-twisting trade-gin, spoke high, swaggered, and sang his pet song, "*Mey mo tirailleur veni!*", in spite of Bo Diare's admonition. Peller was compelled to call him aside when opportunity offered, and speak to him in terms such as were used in the army, to bring him to his senses.

"Yassah, lieutenant," Yatera assented to the reproaches.

"Not that, fool! Monsieur Heimotz——"

"Yassah."

"Help with the boxes, thou!"

Yatera obediently joined the boat boys in their tasks. But he exhibited such extreme good spirits and created so much confusion, that Peller, in desperation, ordered him to stand aside and do nothing. This, the private fulfilled conscientiously, lying down in the shade of a convenient mango-tree, and snoring within a few minutes.

Barth, who shuttled between his own shop and the new establishment, caught sight of him, and brought him awake with a few kicks in the ribs. Yatera awoke, stood up, and looked to Peller for support. Then he received the surprize of his life. Peller came over, and cuffed him in the approved German manner. Seemingly forgetting his orders of a few minutes before, he called him a lazy fellow, and promised a whipping.

"How—how?" was all Yatera could summon in the way of protest.

Then, humiliated and smarting, he hovered about, aimlessly attempting to help. In all his days as a *tirailleur* Peller had never struck him. What was wrong with the world? Samake and Bo Diare smiled at each other whenever he passed, and his rancor grew.

During the afternoon, Peller found a chance to talk privately with the ex-soldiers. He explained to Yatera. He advised them to mix with the natives, to talk of fetish things, to sound the people of the village concerning the mysterious Owo.

The most useful of the trio on this errand should be, naturally enough, Yatera. He alone was a fetishist. Peller detailed him to circulate about, to speak with all the natives who were willing to talk. As a negro loves to discourse, this was a large order. Yatera wandered from hut to hut, was pushed aside several times by white men, expulsed forcibly from sundry compounds, and at last gained a clearing on the outskirts of the village, where a knot of men were gathered, talking with animation.

THE center of attention was an Aboure, with the blue tattoo on his cheeks.

The fellow was tall, muscled, clad in a long *boubou* of snow white, with a red rag tied about his head. He carried an open umbrella as a shelter from the hot sun. Yatera, who was simple-minded in comparison with the two corporals, did not lack in native cunning. Knowing that the information might prove useful to his chief, he questioned deftly, with all the twists and turns allowed by the limited vocabulary of his tongue.

"Art thou black or white?" was the first question asked him by the leader, whose name was Ako, meaning "chicken."

"I'm black."

"Who should be master in a black man's land?"

"Black men."

"Why aren't they?"

This was a facer. Yatera could not answer.

"Because they do not know their strength," Ako said. "The day will come when they do. And that day, the white men will be killed, when the sun sits down *nya-wake*."

When the sun sits down, that is, when the sun seems to halt briefly in the zenith at high noon. Yatera assented that it would be well for all white men to be finished off, some day, when the sun sat down.

Ako held up his hand for attention.

"Tonight is the feast of the *anenge*—the crocodile. Let all come to meet me in the bush. I shall then have word of Owo."

News of Owo! Just what the lieutenant wanted, thought Yatera. Fate was serving him well. He would have something to his credit, information that Samake and Bo Diare, in spite of their intelligence and Nigerian origin, could not procure. A feather in Yatera's cap! Ako, accustomed to the ordinary native, whose intercourse with the white man is confined to laboring for him, never suspected that a black of Yatera's low standing could betray him.

He accepted Yatera as a new recruit, swearing him to secrecy however, with a fetishist oath which Yatera contrived, through a slight shift in form, to make invalid. This ceremony over, Yatera borrowed a pipeful of tobacco and ambled back leisurely to the shop. The sight of his lieutenant behind a counter, dealing out small articles and bottles of drinks to a crowd of natives attracted by the opening of the new trading-place, was a deep surprize to Yatera.

Bo Diare, pencil in hand, was making crude marks in a ledger, marks that indicated the number of articles sold, and having a hard time indeed with his first attempt at bookkeeping.

Yatera waited for Peller to be comparatively clear of the swirling, ill-smelling crowd, and whispered—

"Lieutenant—" then, remembering—"massa——"

"What dost thou want?"

"I will learn of Owo tonight."

"Good work, Yatera. If thou canst tell me where to find him, twenty francs will be thine when we return to Cotonou."

"I'll savvy tonight, massa."

And shooting a triumphant glance at the two corporals sweating over their unusual task, he left the shop, to resume his detective work, conscious of new importance.

The ceremonial to him would have a double purpose. First, he would gather valuable information for Peller, then again, he would enjoy himself. The fetishist ceremonies appealed to his negro soul, hungry for mysticism. Down by the beach where the workmen were rolling the palm-oil casks on the canoes coming in loaded with fish, in the sheds where the coopers were at work with resounding mallets, the conversation concerned the *anenge* feast. Those few negroes who had been converted to Christianism, and still held tightly to their new-born faith, were carefully avoided. One by one, the blacks took the oath of secrecy. Yatera smoked, and waited for evening.

Once again the moon lifted over the trees that bordered the northern shore of the lagoon.

Yatera finished his meal of boiled rice and smoked fish, which he took by himself, a few steps away from Bo Diare and Samake. Then he lay flat on his back, his hands crossed beneath his woolly head, staring at the moon in the cloudless sky. The smoke from his pipe curled pleasantly and formed pictures. His child's mind, tensed for the marvelous in preparation for the fetish feast, gave various interpretations. The vague outline of a man with a sun-helmet, therefore a white man, therefore Peller, who to Yatera was the only white man worth mentioning. There were various other shapes, horizontal in the light breeze, which he felt were canoes wandering away, on an immense lagoon. Suddenly, he started. Yes, there was a crocodile with mouth agape! Yatera had recalled a prediction made by a fetish man, when he was a child. On the day he saw the crocodile, neither on land nor in the water but in the air, Yatera would be doomed?

"Pow!" he muttered. "That was so long ago."

But his peace was disturbed. He was worried. One brought up in idol worship does not forget the precepts of the crude faith. His instinct, as exact as any watch, told him that it was time to leave for the bush. He rose, stretched, coughed, in an attempt to gain a look from his former friends. But Bo Diare and Samake pretended to be deeply engaged in their cast-iron pot.

So, feeling depressed, Yatera wandered forestward, following other men, faint whitish shadows against the bushes. They were all going to the meeting-place. He recognized the broad shoulders of one of the coopers, quickened his step and joined the group. He conversed in hushed tones, concerning other mysteries he had seen performed at night.

An hour passed before the band left the moonlit sand beach and took a narrow trail into the bush. Before him, and behind him he could hear the stumbling of the water-boys, unused to the trails at night.

"This way, this way," some one said.

And he shifted again and again.

Then, at last, in the light of a small fire, he distinguished a group of huts, before which were squatted many negroes. He followed the cooper to one of the huts and sat down in his turn, hugging his knees, silently awaiting developments.

Near the fire, a tall white shape, his countryman, Ako, stood motionless. All eyes were fastened on the representative of the mysterious Owo.

Soon, however, Ako moved, extended his hands in a gesture of benediction over the low flames. An immense sheet of red flames appeared to surround the leader, shooting high above his head and lighting up the clearing with ruddy light. Yatera saw the gleam of the negroes' eyeballs and teeth. They looked fierce, expectant. Ako repeated the gesture. This time a formidable spray of green fire arose, and all was green with the light.

A gasp of admiration went around the circle.

Yatera had seen rockets used in army signaling, on several occasions. He felt an immense superiority over these natives who marveled at the manifestation. He grunted in scorn, and received for reward a terrific elbow blow from his friend, the cooper, who enjoyed the spectacle, and did not admit of any one not sharing his pleasure. Blue flames, yellow flames, purple flames were evoked by Ako, and at each new color more applause resounded. One of the few women present, going mad with fervor ahead of schedule, rose and danced with short, stiff-legged hops toward the fire, squealing at the top of her voice. This was the touch needed to break all restraint, and the natives gave free play to their lungs.

Then, persons wishing to know the future rose, went to the fire, questioned Ako. The tall negro gravely mixed various concoctions, some of which were drunk down, others poured over the head of the consultant.

Yatera felt bored and thirsty. In exchange for a copper coin, the cooper allowed him to take a pull at a gin bottle, keeping a restraining hand on the neck. But he was dealing with an expert, in Yatera. He did not swallow, but allowed the liquid to pour down his throat, filling his mouth full. He had absorbed a third of the bottle before the other was aware of the trick. There was a short argument which resulted in Yatera paying over another coin. The taste awakened, he bought all rights to the container, and swilled the fearful stuff as long as it lasted.

By this time, Ako was speaking, and the name of Owo was often repeated, Owo, the all-powerful, who safeguarded men, so that the bullets from the white men's rifles would not touch them. Owo promised his followers many things. The cleaning out process of the white men would begin with the French across the border. At first, of course, care would be exercised. Single men would be shot down from ambush. Then, after fear had crept into all white men, the blacks would rise and massacre the traders and soldiers. This talk would not have convinced intelligent natives long since reconciled to the white rule. But Ako's auditors were of the lowest mental type, all willing to be flattered with praise of their powers.

Yatera felt more thirsty and purchased another bottle. The long abstinence from drink while at Bakkasu on the Ubangi, the sea trip, had contributed to a magnificent drought. In him arose drunkenness, livid, stark drunkenness, which has made foolish better men than the Aboure.

Ako, he realized, now held something in his hands—something black, and yet glistening, something with a rim. A high hat! A brand new high hat!

Wood was thrown on the fire, so that Ako and his high hat, certainly a strange combination, were visible from all sides of the clearing. Ako spoke at length concerning the feat he was about to undertake.

Then the hat was deposited bottom-up on the ground. From a basket Ako took several white objects which Yatera discovered to be eggs. These eggs were dropped one by one into the hat, then a cloth thrown over the whole in plain view of the assistants. This done, Ako once more shouted, calling several men by name to testify that they had all seen the eggs dropped into the hat.

The cloth was removed.

With a swift and sure gesture Ako placed the hat on his head, previously bared of the red covering. Yatera stared. The eggs must have been broken!

But Ako lifted the hat. Nothing dropped from within the headgear. This time the applause was not so loud. The people were awed. Ako, to conclude the effect, threw the hat to the nearest man who passed it along, the hat thus traveling from hand to hand around the entire assembly.

"There is nothing—" Ako said loudly. "Look!"

He took two round brass containers, each holding several quarts, and passed them to the man near at hand to show they were empty. Then, holding one above the other, he poured out some liquid into the lower vessel. Taking this last container, he held it mouth down. Not a drop!

Again the murmur of awe.

Ako lifted the first vessel above his head, tilted it, and although it had been empty but a second before another stream of water ran out!

Had Yatera been in full possession of his senses, had the gin not blinded him to the obvious, he would have remained undeceived by the tricks. Understanding the colored lights he would have reasoned that the disappearance of the eggs, and the appearance of water where water could not logically have been, were also tricks. But, swung by the mob spirit, his own brain reeling, he applauded with the others, forgot his mission, and followed with popping eyes the other tricks of Ako.

"You have all seen the eggs disappear?" Ako challenged. "You all have seen? The same may be done with a man, with many men, if Owo so wills—does any one wish to try? I want a man to come forward, a brave man, for although I know I can make him disappear into the air, I doubt if I can fetch him back——"

At the first offer one or two men had risen, willing to try the experiment, doubtless curious as to what had happened to the eggs and water. But when the final clause was given out they sat down, trying hard to make it appear that their rising had been casual curiosity. Ako probably knew his audience; many of the blacks would have faced bullets without flinching, some had fought both the Germans and the French in the Togo and Dahomey campaigns. But the prospect of disappearing into space, and never being heard of again? No one would try.

"When the time comes," said Ako, pressing his advantage completely to sway his listeners, "Owo will give the word, and all white men will vanish. But before he decides to help you, you must show that you deserve to be helped, that you are not cravens unworthy of notice from the gods!"

"What did he say?" inquired Yatera, who had not fully understood.

"Owo has doomed all white men, beginning with the French across the border."

A number of the more enthusiastic youths had gone forward to Ako, and received each a short-barreled Winchester carbine and a package of ammunition. Payment was not asked, but the young men were put under the charge of a wizened, white-wooled native, who was to lead them toward the border where they would join the roaming dissidents.

Then the Feast of the Crocodile began. In spite of the law of Togoland against secret meetings the tom-toms suddenly resounded, proving that Ako did not fear interference from the owners of the land. The dancing became general, more women having arrived. For a time men and women were separated, dancing in groups. Then the fever ran high and they mingled—the feast of *anenge* was on.

Under the pale moon, Yatera, stripped of his *boubou*, his teeth gleaming, his eyes bloodshot, threw himself into the celebration with utter abandonment. The hours slid by, and reeking with sweat, the dancers went on. Pots of *bangi*—palm-wine—and bottles of trade-liquors were circulated in profusion. No one questioned the origin, least of all Yatera.

Owo was great, and provided for his people.

"*Fofo*, ho!" cried Ako, and the band obediently danced faster.

At last Yatera sank to the ground exhausted.

Later, he tried to get up. He must seek out Ako, question him about the meaning of the crocodile who was neither in the water nor on land. Before seeing the fatal crocodile, he had seen the shape of his white master. Ako would know whether the sign applied to the white man or to the Aboure. He must speak to Ako, consult him——

His brain pulsated with the rumbling of the drums.

**LIEUTENANT KOENIG**, commanding gunboat *Wissenburg*, requests the presence of Monsieur Eugene Heimotz at dinner. Thursday evening.

Peller turned the thick note-paper over between his fingers. What did the naval officer want with him? Merely a courtesy between white men in an out-of-the-way place? If so, he should be flattered. Barth had told him that Koenig seldom mixed with any but military men and that he scorned traders. Or did Koenig suspect him? At any rate, on board the *Wissenburg* he might learn much of interest. He had long before concluded that the authorities of Togoland were connected with the native trouble in Dahomey.

In the search for Owo, Peller had made little progress. Yatera had returned in the morning, debauch written on his face, sodden with gin, with a vague rambling account of fetish ceremonies. The canoe boys, loaned by Dhenli, were not over intelligent and had failed to learn anything. Ako, the tall negro in the white *boubou*, was closely connected with the mysterious prophet, all agreed. Peller had an unformed plan to kidnap Ako and force him to tell the whereabouts of his leader.

There was need for hurry.

He could not go on indefinitely pretending to be a trader. In spite of the sound instructions from the officers in Cotonou, he could not forget military ways—become a skilled merchant overnight. Barth had already lifted his eyebrows at the manner in which he conducted the shop, had pointed out that the natives had cheated him in a sale of palm-oil by placing other liquids in the tins. Yes, he must hurry.

At eight o'clock, he went to the beach, and found there the rowboat awaiting him, manned by four uniformed negroes, who saluted respectfully.

Three minutes later he was shaking hands with the tall German on the main deck of the gunboat. Koenig's rather handsome face expressed nothing but cordiality.

"I thought you might be a trifle lonely," the naval officer said. "Barth is a good enough fellow, but doesn't shine outside of his trader's prattle."

"I'm a trader myself."

Koenig winked as a man who does not believe all things that are spoken.

"I have had dinner served in the top cabin," he said, leading the way up the ladder. "It's not as cool as on deck, but is screened off, and comparatively free from mosquitoes."

The cabin was evidently used as commanding-post, and was more rightly a chart-room. Iron shutters could be raised over the glass windows, a protection against bullets on active service. Koenig's hospitality left nothing to be desired, and the snowy table-cloth scintillated with silverware and porcelain. A silent youth in a white tunic and white trousers, napkin over one arm, stood ready.

"My butler," Koenig introduced with a smile.

During the meal, there was little conversation. The fare was unusually good. Peller had drunk just enough to feel comfortable, and lighted a long black cigar offered him by his host, when the coffee was served.

Peller glanced at the clock on the wall, casually. Nine.

Koenig, who also had indulged freely in wine, bruskly shifted to German, scrutinizing Peller's face as he did so.

Peller lifted a protesting hand.

"Don't," he begged. "I never got beyond '*Ja*'."

"If you prefer to keep your secrets, even from a friend in the service—as you will," Koenig assured him. "If you are not supposed to speak German, then don't. But, let me tell you: I know what you are. Agent for Godelt of Hamburg? Yes. But weren't you supplied to them by the secret service? Much as you try to conceal it, Heimotz, there's a trace of military bearing about you. More than you could have possibly acquired in the three months' service required of Swiss citizens."

Peller did not reply, but smiled modestly.

"What regiment did you serve with in the Swiss army, by the way?"

"The twenty-fourth."

"A Swiss would have said: the twenty-fourth *battailon*. They don't use the term 'regiment'. I studied in Neufchatel for quite a while, you know."

"I would have said '*battailon*'," Peller assured him.

"And are you from Lausanne? The twenty-fourth *battailon* is recruited in the Jura district. You should think of such small matters. Although I suppose the French do not study the systems of other nations, as we do. But we'll go on speaking French, if you will. You speak it almost as well as I do."

Peller acknowledged the compliment with a nod.

"Where did—er—Godelt send you before you came to Dahomey?" asked Koenig.

Peller mentioned several locations in Africa.

"I, too, have traveled. And in better countries than this," Koenig assured him. "A few years ago, I was in Chili."

"Stationed there?"

"Yes. Then the civil war came along. Congress against the president. Do you remember?"

Peller had seldom heard of Chili, which he constantly confused with Brazil, and nothing at all about the civil war mentioned. But he nodded.

"I asked leave from my cruiser, and permission to enlist in one of the factions, to get a little experience in active service," Koenig went on. "It was granted. I was on board the congress gunboat *Blanca Encalada*, until she was sunk by the presidential flotilla. Then I fought in the land forces, until Valparaiso fell. Do you know what I admired most about the Chilians?"

"Their bravery?"

"No. Their ruthlessness. Prisoners were in the way—could not be released. They shot them. That prevented worry over them, see?"

"Rather cruel."

"But the only course. A dangerous man is best dead. For instance, take your case, Heimotz. The French caught you red-handed, putting the natives in possession of guns to be used against them."

"Yes."

"Had I been in their place, do you know what I should have done? Taken you to one side, quietly, and shot you."

Peller's hand reached out for a match. His cigar had gone out.

"An unpleasant after-dinner topic," he laughed. "And touches me rather near home. By the way, when did you arrive here?"

"At Condocodji? The afternoon you arrived, something like eight hours before."

Peller sighed with relief. He had disliked the thought of the other officers sending him into the hands of armed forces.

"On what errand are you?" he asked casually.

"As if you don't know!" scoffed Koenig.

"It was not presumed that I should be forced to come here, so I have no information from—headquarters," Peller said.

"What do we do here?" Koenig explained. "We bring guns."

"What guns?"

"The guns for the natives. There are two cases on board. No one questions the movement of a war-ship in home waters. The French have native spies trying to find out how the guns reach the border."

"But—will you not be seen unloading them?"

"No. Tonight, our black agent will come here and take them ashore in a canoe."

Peller hid his astonishment, and sought to make the most of the occasion.

"Say, who is this 'Owo' I hear the blacks talking about? An agent, too?"

"Owo does not exist. He's one and the same with Ako, the tall black you've probably seen on shore."

"That's rather a clever trick!" Peller exclaimed.

"He didn't think of it himself. That was all arranged by us. We took him and trained him for the job. Moreover, he doesn't dare leave us for he is accused of theft and murder on the Ivory Coast; that's why we can trust him. He can't betray us."

Peller concealed his exultation. So Ako was in the village, within reach! And he knew the power behind Ako.

Koenig was moving, opening the drawer of the table. He drew out a large revolver, which he showed to Peller, who watched him in surprize. Koenig then replaced it, leaving the butt in plain view.

"Right at hand," he announced.

"And—why?" Peller asked.

"That's a little story I have to tell you," Koenig said smoothly. "Once, there was a gentleman who trusted a native. And the native betrayed him. So another gentleman asked him to dinner, gave him rope to hang himself, listened to his questions, answered them, then showed him a revolver, and said, 'You are caught.'"

"RIGHT!" agreed Peller.

There was a long silence. The clock on the wall ticked, and at intervals ground, as if clearing its throat.

"Who gave me away?" Peller asked suddenly.

"One of your men."

"How much?"

"Nothing. He was drunk, and crazed by the fetish ceremony. He told Ako all about you, wanted him to protect you."

"What do you intend to do with me?"

"I gave you information that can not be held by any man save a German. You deliberately asked for it. What's the answer?"

Peller was blankly silent.

He glanced at the butt of the revolver jutting from the drawer. Koenig was too near for a surprize.

He realized fully. It was only a question of hours, perhaps minutes. He grasped the edge of the table, and stared at his host, now his jailer.

"I'm sorry," said Koenig.

Again Peller's cigar had gone out. He reached for another match. Koenig followed the moving hand with his eyes. With a sudden movement Peller shoved the table upward. Koenig made a pass at the drawer, but missed. As for Peller, his one thought was for the door. He would leap over the side, take a chance of reaching shore. Once in the bush, with his men or without them, he might reach French territory.

Koenig perceived his plan, and leaped upon him, grasping him about the knees, and calling out for help. The two men struggled about the room for the possession of the revolver which had fallen to the floor from the gaping drawer. The Frenchman's strength seemed doubled by his danger, and he threw Koenig aside and picked up the gun. The German grasped his wrist. A cartridge exploded, followed by the crash of the bullet and the tinkling of falling glass.

On deck could be heard the sound of running men.

* * *

MEN in uniform in the doorway, hands grasping at his shoulders, Koenig was holding his arms, but he struggled on, blindly. A rifle butt fell on his shoulder. Intense pain shot through his arm. More blows.

He fell to his knees.

Then shrill, triumphant, came a familiar yell.

"*Leileileilei*——"

A moment later, Samake was in the cabin, followed by Bo Diare and Yatera.

The three *tirailleurs* were veterans of many campaigns. The German's natives had never been in battle. And, of the twelve men on the gunboat, six had received shore liberty for the night. Shrilling the war yell of the Bambara, Samake, seeing his chief's face bloody, fought in his customary way. The shotgun he held lacked a bayonet, but the weapon rose and fell like a club. Bo Diare was silent, but with his stout stick did good execution.

Furniture splintered. The remaining glass-panes were burst from their frames, the clock on the wall was smashed by a wild swing. Peller felt himself half-carried out of the cabin into the darkness of the deck. He was dazed. A stream of blood ran from his nose. But he glanced backward. Koenig, conspicuous in his white uniform, lay in a corner on top of the broken table. His men were scattered about in various recumbent positions.

On the lower deck were two long boxes laid side by side. Peller knew what they contained.

"Overboard!" he ordered.

Samake obeyed.

Swiftly they got into the canoe. The paddlers took their places. On shore lanterns were moving, and the voice of Barth, dominating the clamor, boomed out inquiries.

"*Fafa*, boys—make quick—" said Peller.

French territory was three miles away.

* * *

BEYOND the shadow thrown by the gunboat the moon was shining. The night was almost as light as day. Peller had a momentary fear that Koenig, recovering, would follow him with a few rounds from the quick-firer—elegant, long, slim, resting on a tripod in the prow.

In fact, before they were many yards away he saw the white figure of the officer, scrambling along the forward deck. Peller turned to Bo Diare.

"Gun?"

Samake, who held the only firearm within reach, handed him the shotgun. Peller released the safety-catch, which, with soldierly coolness Samake had pushed home before using the weapon as a club. The distance was too great for the lead pellets to do much harm, save perhaps to frighten the servers away from the quick-firer. The two barrels were discharged, and the spattering of buckshot could be heard on the iron deck.

Koenig and his men paid no heed. They were plainly visible, grouped about the piece. Soon, a detonation crashed out. Birds rose from the bushes. Cries resounded from the village. Near the canoe a column of water shot up. The reports continued, and Peller, although he knew only a chance shot could reach him in the uncertain, deceptive light, ordered the canoe into the shadows by the bank. The canoe boys required no further urge. The stout wood of their paddle-handles bent under the strokes.

A curve in the shore-line, a jutting promontory of bush-covered sand, and Peller thought himself safe, until, in the sudden cessation of firing, he heard the splashing of oars. But he had many paddlers and the canoe flitted forward again like a ghost in the shadow.

Peller felt of his shoulder: he believed his collar-bone was broken. His nose was still bleeding, and several bumps were lifting the skin of his scalp. He attempted to stanch the flow from his nostrils, and at the same time, found occasion to question his corporals.

It appeared that Samake, after hearing Yatera's narrative, had decided to follow Ako, hoping to find the mysterious prophet. Recalling the need for caution, he had ordered the canoe boys to have the larger canoe ready by the lagoon-beach. Ako, from his hut in the native village, had gone toward the gunboat, with three companions. When Samake saw them preparing to enter the rowboat, he had sought out his own canoe, and circling to the opposite side of the little war vessel, had awaited developments. Shots had been heard. With typical decision, Samake and Bo Diare, had plunged into the fight.

"Ako is Owo," Peller informed the *tirailleurs*. "The other white man told me so."

Yatera squatted near by, his knees drawn up under his chin. Peller was but human. He had failed in his mission because of Yatera and his garrulity. Forgetting that he had made a principle to refrain from scolding a man before his comrades, he gave the Aboure the tongue lashing he richly deserved. Samake and Bo Diare listened with growing indignation.

"Pig—savage—bushman!"

Other epithets followed until Peller called a halt.

Yatera, who had endured in silence, asked suddenly—

"Ako, Owo, all same man?"

"Yes."

"Yatera no be good *tirailleur?*"

"No."

Yatera was silent. The sound of the oars had dwindled away.

A sudden lurch of the canoe, and Yatera was standing.

Then he plunged overboard. For an instant the surface of the lagoon closed over him, and a ripple undulated in a wide circle. His black round head reappeared some yards off. He was making for the shore, with the peculiar dog crawl of his breed.

"He go desert!" Samake exclaimed, slipping a cartridge into the shot gun.

But Peller restrained him with a gesture:

"He is discharged, and can not desert. But he is going away; thou art right."

The swimmer was close to the shore now, scarcely visible in the bush shadows. Then he merged into the darkness.

Yatera had returned to the primitive. Familiar surroundings and the fetish feast had driven away the long and painstakingly acquired discipline and soldierly pride. He was doubtless on his way to join Ako. Peller recalled episodes in the Aboure's career: He saw him lying on a river bank, his arms slashed, unconscious. His first words, on being revived, had concerned his duty.

AN AFRICAN'S loyalty is granted, not to an idea or country, but to the man immediately representing that idea or that country. Yatera's loyalty went, not to France, the distant and unknown land, not for the beauty of conquest, the soul-satisfying idea of creating a new empire—but to Peller.

When Yatera had first enlisted in the army he had been an unformed, raw black. Peller had first commanded him in the Sudan, then, for five years, in the Chad and Ubangi regions. Yatera's memory as a soldier was completely centered about Peller. Without Peller he was lost. Another white man, similar to Peller, with the indefinable quality that appeals to blacks, would soon have earned the same loyalty.

But there was no other white man. Yatera's world had suddenly gone out from beneath his feet.

He reached the shore, hoisted himself on a sand-bank, and sat down to regain his breath. A burning shame consumed him. In the presence of the Ouolof and the Bambara, he, Yatera, had been called a bad soldier. Yes, he had forgotten his errand, drunk from the gin-bottle, been bewildered by trickery. If Ako was the prophet, then Ako had lied. All of his doings were false. The so-called miracles could be explained.

Yatera lost sight of the canoe that bore the white man away. He had been half-tempted to follow. Well might Samake and

Bo Diare scorn him! They had saved the white chief. They had showed good judgment. His resentment of the treatment granted him by the two corporals dwindled.

How could he regain Peller's good opinion, how could he make him say—

"Thou wert foolish, Yatera, but now thou art a good soldier."

That was the important thing, to tear recognition from the lieutenant. How? An idea came to him, dazzling, superb.

He must go back to the village. There was work to be done there.

But he could not go back immediately. The people would be astir. He would be recognized and shot. For he knew that a white man had been hurt on the gunboat. He had seen Koenig stretched out limply in the deck cabin. Even though he got up and was able to go to the gun, he had been hurt.

He decided that he needed sleep if he wished to be strong and alert on the morrow. He rolled his *boubou* in a fashion of pillow, lay down on the sand and fell asleep under the moon. It was not until the full heat of the sun burned his skin that he awoke. He got up, stretched, and sought a trail through the bush, which he followed to a village. There he was granted food in exchange for a copper piece, also tobacco for his pipe. Then he set out leisurely, ruminating over his plan.

It was midday when he reached the outskirts of Condocodji.

Everything was quiet. But the policemen, in their neat uniforms, carried rifles, instead of the customary bayonet, and moved about in pairs, probably looking for stragglers from the canoe party. From a distance Yatera regarded the shop which Peller had established. Barth, the trader, was there, directing the removal of the abandoned goods to his own shop. Below, near the beach, was the canoe which had carried the baggage. His chief's mission must have been important to risk the loss of such valuable things. But Yatera would be able to go to Peller and say—

"See, I do harm, but I repair it."

The bell, hung on the pole before the Barth factory, rang loudly. Yes, it must be almost noon.

Yatera was worried. Could Ako have gone from the village?

The coopers, under the shed, abandoned their work, left for their huts and the midday meal. The beach became deserted. Yatera, emboldened, stepped out into the quiet street. No one saw him. He marched through the village toward the open space where he had first met Ako. His instinct told him that there he would find the big negro.

And he did. The false prophet was seated in the midst of a group of men, talking high, and eating handfuls of rice between speeches. Yatera was near at hand, before one of the listeners glanced up, and remained, mouth agape, staring at him.

Ako followed his disciple's glance, turned around, and also saw Yatera.

"Yo!" he greeted.

"Yo!" said Yatera, and lunging forward grasped Ako about the neck.

The man was powerful, taller than Yatera, and stronger. But the *tirailleur* had a purpose. His fingers tightened. Ako tore at Yatera's arms, with his finger-nails dug deep scratches in the black skin, from which the blood welled. But Yatera felt nothing. All his being, all his strength, was in the clutch of his ten fingers. Ako's lips parted, his tongue protruded, his eyes rolled as his face darkened and the veins in his forehead distended.

The disciples, evidently believing the fetishist able to take care of himself, stood by watching. Ako was paying the price for sincere belief; no one would offend him by replacing the gods that were said to watch over his person. At last, Ako relaxed, his head fell back heavily on Yatera's hand, his legs quivered. For some seconds, Yatera kept his grip. Then he straightened up and grinned.

"Yo!" he remarked. "*Nya-wahe!*"

The sun was at the zenith.

* * *

IN THE darkened room of the bungalow where Peller had been put to bed, Daniaux sat, astride a chair, facing the sick man, his chin resting on his folded arms.

"You cultivate adventures, as a Dutchman, tulips!" Daniaux was saying. "Be glad you're back, and don't pull a long face."

"Are you certain about my man Yatera?"

"Quite. The spies reported it at the border-post, where they wired us."

"They shot him—"

"But he got Ako. That's the important thing."

"What's going to happen about the whole business, Daniaux?"

"Don't worry. The time is not ripe for a break. The Germans are as much in the wrong as we are. If you went on an illicit errand on their territory, the purveying of guns to dissidents makes up for it. They'll leave well enough alone. My advice is to try and get some rest."

Daniaux left.

Bo Diare, who left to no one else the task of watching his master, squatted in the doorway, once again in uniform. Samake was near at hand. Peller called both to his bedside.

"You savvy Yatera die?"

"We savvy."

He expected a voiced regret, an expression of sentiments such as he, himself, felt. But here, again, he was up against an known quantity, human beings who did not have the sensitiveness, or the hypocrisy, of his own color.

Samake merely nodded.

But Bo Diare summed up his view of the event in a few words—

"I tell him his *gris-gris*—fetishes—be no good. . . ."

# TRAPPERS

### by Raymond S. Spears

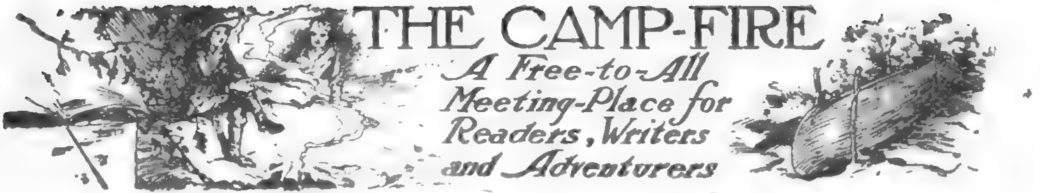
THE muskrat trappers on Chesapeake Bay catch more fur than all other fur takers. They are hired by the day, by owners of marshes, and catch the animals up to thousands on these protected fur farms. The most efficient trappers are the wolvers of the Western States, some of the best of whom are employed by the United States Forest Service to rid the range of coyotes, loboes, cougars, cattle and sheep-killing bears and other "varmints."

A good trapper from the green timber of Maine would find himself nonplussed by waterhole desert conditions. In every region one must learn certain local differences, a trapper from Canada finding the mink of the Cumberlands in Tennessee far more cunning than those along Lake Superior. A New Englander boasts of catching red foxes, but a Utah wolver doesn't think a fox is much.

A line of traps extends through the evergreen forests a hundred, even two or three hundred, miles, and is followed from camp to camp on snowshoes. Some Western trappers work from automobiles. They start in the north, and run before the Winter, stopping a day or a week to spot-trap where they find mink, muskrats, skunks, coyotes, wildcats—any fur—in numbers. Putting out a hundred traps, they may cover only a short creek, a pond or two, or a few miles of runways. They move their traps at every jump. The woods line-trapper puts down a hundred or five hundred traps, and leaves them, each in its cubby, till Spring.

All furs are best at the first full prime. In the Canadian border woods, this is from November 10 to December 31st. Sunshine, rubbing and wearing fade and cut the fur. Muskrats and beaver, alone, are best in the late Winter. Southern furs are thinner, less valuable than Northern. But many furs make up the lack of individual values.

Muskrat trapping is the simplest there is, probably. Nevertheless one must know at least three thousand general outdoor facts, woodcraft, trail methods, marshes, streams, ponds and the like data; and from eight hundred to one thousand two hundred facts about muskrats, their habits, food, domestic lives, weather ideas, and the like. A mink trapper must know probably from a half more to twice as much. I doubt if a wolf trapper could become successful if he did not know five thousand facts about wolves generally and one thousand five hundred to three thousand facts about the particular individuals with which he copes, or seeks to cope. Until one knows the general and particular habits of wolves, trying to trap them is nearly all luck. A good trapper has, fact for fact, the equivalent of a high-school education—and perhaps of that acquired in college, too, by some students. The wolverine is in itself a surprizing and superior problem in wilderness mathematical theory, psychological conquest—whatever this brute's cussedness and cunning resembles or parallels. And yet boys run away from school to be trappers!



# THE CAMP-FIRE

*A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers*

**Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.**

**We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.**

**But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.**

**Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.**

**If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.**

THIS comrade certainly feels strongly on the question of soda as a snake-bite cure. Me, I'm neutral. I just act as toastmaster or introducer and dodge as soon as the dishes begin sailing through the air. By this time I've introduced so many comrades advocating or opposing so many and such various cures that I doubt whether any snake would bite me if I slapped him in the face and if he did, he'd be taking a fool chance.

Seriously, however, I believe in bringing up these cures for discussion. Some of them are good, some not; some very likely good in some cases, no good in others. It does no harm to hear about them if we just keep our heads and don't jump at conclusions, and there aren't any of us that can't learn.

Angels Camp, California.

We have all kinds of men in office and in positions of trust. They serve for their salary, not for the good of the public. They become bigoted. One of them says the soda treatment in snake bite is no good. The soda *will* cure, and *does* cure. Soda cures the bite of the cobra in five to ten minutes, and the rattlesnake bite just as quickly.

Many lives are lost through following just such men's ignorance. I wish he would come in my dooryard and tell me it would not cure. I would give him the worst "licking" he ever got, and I am sixty years old.—C. S. Acken.

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SOMETHING more about that robbery of the bank in Panama City:

Denver, Colorado.

I noticed in the issue of January 30, 1923, a couple of answers to the question of what happened to the men who tunnelled into the bank in Panama City.

At the time the question was asked I intended to write and tell what little I knew of the case, but I thought I would wait and see if some one else with more dope than I had would come across.

MR. GREENE'S story of how they went into the contracting business is correct, but his information on the vault is a little wrong, as they not only found steel, but plenty of it, as there was eight feet of interlocked steel rails and cement besides a steel floor in the vault. If not, why did they use an acetylene torch to cut their way through? Note the acetylene and oxygen was supplied to them from the Gorgona shops on orders from the —— office on the pretext that they were using it in their contracting business. The amount they got from the bank was never given out, but the reports had from $20,000 to $250,000.

The tunnel was a real job—lighted and timbered and showed that at least one or more of the gang were experienced miners. They made their getaway in a 38-foot power-boat named the *Chispa* which they had purchased a month before from W. O. (Billy) Mealer of Culebra, C. Z., and the boatman, a Panamanian who had been employed by Mealer, was kept on by the newcomers to run the boat.

They were a little premature in getting into the vault, as they hit the floor of the vault before they expected to and, knowing that the heat from the acetylene torch would betray them when the vault was opened, had to finish the job before they intended to.

THAT they had to go in a hurry and were not prepared was shown by the fact that they were seen in stores purchasing grub and guns on the morning the robbery was discovered and did not leave the boat-landing at the hotel in Panama Bay till after 8:30 in the morning.

The *Chispa* was about the fastest boat in Panama harbor and, with the hour or so start that they had, they were not seen after they had rounded the point of Panama Bay.

The boat was found beached about 180 miles south of Panama several days after the robbery and the police tracked them for several more days, but lost their trail shortly after they crossed the line into Colombia.

That was the last heard of them till the hired boatman returned. He was arrested and Mealer went his bail. He was released shortly after, as they could not prove anything on him. Here is the story I heard him tell Mealer in Culebra after his release:

HE CLAIMED he had no idea of what had happened and did not know anything was wrong. They told him several days before to have the boat ready for a trip to Colombia at any time and, while their hurry in getting away surprized him, he did not think anything of it till he heard them quarreling and blaming one another for messing things up.

He had noticed they had several heavy bags with them, but, as they had not allowed him to handle them when putting them into the boat, he had no idea what they contained. The engine commenced to miss and give trouble and finally quit, but, as the *Chispa* had sails, they managed to beach her and take to the bush. He knew from what he had overheard on the boat that they had committed some crime in Panama and tried to leave them on the beach, but one of them stuck a gun up against him and told him he would either help them pack their stuff or pack some lead. They then loaded him down with a gunny-sack that, to hear him tell it, weighed a ton at least. It was all he could pack (and those natives could pack 100 lbs. without any trouble) and as each of the other three men had all they could handle, it was safe to say that they must had at least 300 lbs. of gold or over $100,000. After they had been in the bush for about a week and felt pretty safe he overheard them planning on how to get rid of him. Two wanted to kill him, but the oldest one, a chap named Jackson if I am not mistaken, wanted to let him go, saying he could not do them any harm if he did manage to make his way out of the bush without any arms or food, but he saved them the trouble of deciding what to do with him by slipping away that night and taking his chances on making his way to the coast, which he finally managed to do.

He was then afraid to return to Panama City for fear he would be arrested, so stayed away for a couple of months, but as his family lived in Panama, he finally decided he had best face it out with the result that after investigation he was released.

That is the last heard of them and nobody seems to know whatever became of them. But it doesn't seem probable that the natives got them, for they were well armed and seemed to be at home in the bush, and as the boatman managed to get out safely, it seems reasonable that they did likewise.

MY THEORY is that they quarreled and finished it by shooting one another, as the boatman said there were hard feelings among them, as they were disappointed over the amount of money stolen and the failure of their plans for the getaway, which theory is borne out by the fact that two years or so after the robbery a man by the name of Jackson gave himself up to the police in Chicago, saying he was one of the men who had robbed the National Bank of Panama City, that he had quarreled with his two partners and had killed them both and remorse over his act had driven him to confess. Whether his story was ever verified or not, I do not know.

This is all I know or can recall at present, but if you will forward this to Mr. Perry of East Orange, possibly it may interest him.—J. McNeim.

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IT SEEMS admitted that bull-fights are cruel. The question is whether those who enjoy them are brutal. One comrade leads off in the negative. How about it?

I've seen only one, but a good one, in Madrid. It's my last, except for the kind they have in southern France and elsewhere, in which a rosette is tied between the bull's horns (a cow will do at a pinch) and anybody can get a money prize by snatching off the rosette. No weapons, no horses, and the bull is not hurt. My one real bull-fight made me brutal—and unpopular. I stood up on my bench and at the top of my lungs implored the bull to kill a picador who was pinned under his horse. My one real bull-fight also made me very, very sick; my stomach got no pleasure from the sight of a half-blindfolded horse deliberately turned side-on (his blind side, of course) to a charging bull so that he could be thoroughly gored for the edification of the spectators and then ridden around with fifteen feet of entrails trailing under his hoofs and any other hoofs that were handy. It's unpleasant to be sick and fighting mad at the same time. How many horses was it that were thus mutilated? Somewhere between ten and twenty in the six courses of that fight.

If the horses were omitted, I think the grace, beauty, skill and daring of the spectacle might make me forget that the bull isn't there because he wants to be and that, so far as I can see, he never has a chance. How about that? If one matador fails, doesn't another one take the job off his hands? Is the bull, as a reward for his own gallantry and skill, ever allowed to go his ways with no worse injuries than those from barbs and the stubby point of the picador's lance? Still, maybe I could enjoy the banderilleros and matadors if the picadors and their horses weren't there to serve entrails by the yard. But then I'd have enjoyed it still more if the bull had finished off that picador and trailed his insides around the arena. Which, as I say, shows that in my little case the spectator had to be brutalized to get any chance of real enjoyment. I confess that, after twenty years, I'm still conscious of regret that the only human casualty that day to balance all those butchered horses was the injured arm of one espáda.

However, I'm only one fellow. The fact remains that bull-fighting is a popular spectacle and numbers millions of supporters besides the eminent William James and our compadre who quotes him:

Philadelphia.

When we come back from Spain and tell our stay-at-home friends that we enjoyed the bull-fights that we saw, many people set us down as brutes. I've always admitted it up until now, but I have just finished reading a book by Irving Brown called "Nights and Days on the Gypsy Trail" and I am ready to prove that I am not a brute. He quotes William James, who said that the potentiality of violent death was what constituted romance and that the glamour of certain occupations and situations was due to this romantic vein in every one of us.

HE GOES on to say: "The term bull-fight is a misnomer. The corrida is not a contest, but an art. It is a spectacle of the human traits just mentioned. It is a spectacle of light, color, movement, with a distinctly plastic appeal. The eye of the Spanish spectator is quick to catch the beauty of line, the power and grace of certain poses.

"Perez de Ayala, the distinguished poet and critic, who was a friend of Joselito, has compared the corrida to Greek tragedy with its purgation of the spirit through pity and terror.

IT HAS been objected that bull-fighting is cruel. This objection is unfortunately true. But enjoyment of corridas is infinitely less cruel than the vicarious pleasure which the world as a whole still takes in wars. The struggle of man with man is so futile, so treacherous in the face of the larger struggle of man with his eternal enemy—the hostile powers of nature. The bull-fight is a representative of this latter type of warfare.

"Though civilization has made us inept for fighting, save that of which the mathematically manipulated long-range cannon is the type, our basic natures have remained unchanged since prehistoric times. The images of our primordial beginnings are to be found in animals. And our kinship with them makes them a spectacle of never-failing interest. In zoos they can not reveal their true selves; but in the arena the fighting-bull is able to display its essential character."—Paul de Moll.

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BACK a couple of years to a discussion of the "Black Widow" spider—a letter from Reginald C. Barker of our writers' brigade:

Boise, Idaho.

Would like to say a few words regarding the "Black Widow" spider, mentioned at Camp-Fire.

There is no doubt in my mind that this spider (*Latrodectus Mactans*, the "Black Widow") is very venomous. In 1917, while camping upon the bank of Snake River, Idaho, I was bitten in the wrist by one of these insects. The entire arm swelled and fine red lines radiated in every direction from the two punctures. In less than a week after being bitten a large, open ulcer formed upon my wrist. This was treated by a Dr. Ross, of Nampa, Idaho, and also by a Dr. Boeck of Boise, and by a third doctor, whose name I have forgotten. The wound finally healed, but to this day I carry the marks of the "Black Widow's" bite.—Reginald C. Barker.

P. S.—For those who are unfamiliar with the appearance of the Black Widow, I will say this: She (?) may be identified by her long legs and glossy black body, the under side of which is marked with two bright scarlet spots.—R. C. B.

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IT IS to be feared that this anonymous comrade has overlooked the fact that when lawyers get busy on a little thing like the Constitution of the United States they can make it read to suit whatever purpose they happen to have in mind at the time.

The Constitution was, of course, written for the people, not for the lawyers, and to any common-sense man of fair mind its intention was very certainly to ensure to the people the right to have and bear arms, so that citizens might be able to use them in the country's defense. I do not know the exact legal quibble by which they were enabled to get past the very plain language and intention of the Constitution, but the argument commonly advanced is that restrictions on arms are necessary to proper police powers. That kind of argument, of course, belongs in "Alice in Wonderland." Since when has the policing of the country become more important than the preservation of the people's fundamental rights? To the average man it would seem that, if the police weren't able to police under the existing Constitution of the United States, it would appear more logical to shake up the police than to shake up the fundamental law of the land.

The every-day observation of the average citizen leads him to believe that an extremely thorough shaking up of most of our policing bodies would result in considerable benefit to the public in many, many ways—and without its being in any way necessary to upset any fundamental laws. Indeed, the most thorough shaking up could be brought about by the simple process of requiring our policing bodies to carry out the full spirit and letter of the duties they are paid to perform.

I beg that no one will make me ill by writing to tell me what a rank injustice my words are to our policing forces—for example, municipal police. I admit that they are fully as good as we careless citizens, so sadly lacking in civic morals, deserve. But any one not dead from the neck up knows that most American police forces are weakened by politics, graft, favoritism, pull, and so on until they smell just about as bad as most of our legislative bodies and other "servants of the people." You couldn't ask even a police force to smell any worse.

But it doesn't follow, if the policing smell gets so bad that even deficient citizens like ourselves begin to ask pointed questions, that we should upset the Constitution of the United States to give them the efficiency that politics and graft have taken away from them. Particularly as a little thing like upsetting the Constitution won't really make them any more efficient.

What needs to be upset is the average citizen's indifference to the administration of all our public affairs and to his duty as a citizen.

I notice an article anent the Sullivan Law. In it is quoted Amendment No. 11 of the Constitution of the U. S., which reads: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of the free state," "the right of *the people* to keep and *bear arms* shall not be infringed."

BUT I notice (which perhaps you overlooked) Amendment No. XIV, Section 1, which also bears on the subject. It reads: "All persons born or naturalized in the U. S. and subject to the jurisduction thereof, are citizens of the *U. S.* and of the State wherein they reside. *No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the U. S. etc.* (We are citizens of the *U. S. first* and of the State afterward.)

Now therefore in view of the foregoing I hold the Sullivan Law is unconstitutional, therefore void, and any legislator who helped pass it is a law-breaker, in fact, worse, as he has defied the supreme law of the land, and any judge sentencing to fine or imprisonment a citizen, standing upon his Constitutional Rights, should be *impeached* and also held liable to damages for false imprisonment and defamation of character. A judge supposed to be versed in law certainly can not plead ignorance of the basic laws of the United States. If he is ignorant of them, he does not belong on the bench.

Let's hear the views of other readers. This subject ought to be put up to the Legislature of New York State and to our representative in Washington, as certain people are trying to have the Sullivan Law made national.—JUSTICE.

P. S. Licenses for the carrying of firearms are being granted to a *select few* in many districts of our country. Why the discrimination? Answer: class legislation.

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THIS is not his first appearance in our magazine and part of the following was written years ago by Colonel Beard, whose article appears in this issue. As, probably through my own fault, it did not appear along with an earlier story of his, I asked him recently to bring it up to date and he complied.

New York City.

My taste for adventuring was largely fed on the tales told me in my very early youth by Captain Tom King, who commanded the *Wanderer* which, in her day, was said to be the fastest thing ever driven by wind through water. It was he who entered the ports of Japan before Perry did. He was reported to have been a pirate and slaver; I don't know; but it is true that the *Wanderer* was heavily armed. I knew him as a quiet man, sympathetic with small boys, who was absorbed in an invention he had made (the forerunner of the Timken bearing) and who never spoke a profane word in my presence but once. Then it was in my behalf, and he made it clear that if he didn't swear it wasn't because he didn't know how. He died in my grandfather's house. A lot of you will have heard of him.

HAVING chosen New York as a birthplace, I was given the name of Wolcott LeCléar Beard by my father, William H. Beard, N.A., and Carrie LeCléar, his wife. Leaving the Peekskill Military Academy, I went to Hobart College, and managed to induce the faculty, in due course of time, to graduate me with the degree of B.S., and then, after a post-graduate course, with that of C.E.

Shortly after having attained my technical degree I was assigned as an assistant engineer to the South Gila Canal Company, then building a very large irrigation plant on the Maricopa spur of the Mojave Desert in Arizona, working from and on the Rio Gila.

The West was wilder then than it is now, though its heyday in that regard already had passed. Our home camp, fifteen hundred strong—called "Damsite"—was a particularly peaceful one, thanks to the untiring efforts of old Jordan, a typical Western sheriff. Still, things did happen, now and then. "Bad-men" were not entirely extinct, though they seldom lasted long. There were too many others looking for a reputation of the same sort.

The most noted of these, in our part of the country, was Pete Spence—"Greaser Pete." He was a little, blond chap, very quiet, and, as I soon found out, a very decent sort, according to his rather limited lights. But he did not like Mexicans—nor they him. Sometimes a person of that race would be so ill-advised as to allow this dislike to become evident, whereupon he would die with great suddenness. Hence Pete's nickname. But he never killed without provocation, and rarely except in self-defense.

I WAS present at one of these occasions, and it made an impression on my infant mind which will never be dimmed.

Pete was sitting in front of his shack. A Mexican approached with his gun *out*, *cocked* and *down*. He said—

"Pete, I guess I got you now."

Pete's reply was not of a nature to be repeated. It was exceedingly short. But long before he finished speaking his gun had appeared, apparently from nowhere, and had spoken twice, with hardly an appreciable interval between the shots. And it was a single-action gun, of course. Both bullets passed through the Mexican's heart, and within half an inch of each other. This feat was considered remarkable, even there.

Pete was a "gun-man" such as one reads about and very, very rarely sees. Partially on this account, as it seemed, though the shooting clearly was done in self-defense, he was sentenced to the Federal Penitentiary at Yuma for nine years. A petition was circulated, asking his pardon. I asked the sheriff to sign it.

"Why, suah I'll sign it," he replied in his soft, Texas drawl. "'Twon't do no good, though. Pete held up the stage twice, an' nobody couldn' prove nothin' on him. Now they can prove sunthin', they'll soak him; we kyan't help that. If one o' the boys kills a greasah nobody'll say nothin' about it."

FEW of the incidents which occurred during my stay of two years at Damsite and in its vicinity made such an impression as did the one of Pete and his enemy. At last I was badly hurt. An undermined bank caved in, bringing my horse and me along with it. I reached the bottom first, the horse arrived immediately afterward, and a ton or so of sand fell upon him. For a while I tried to hang on, but it was of no use. So, after loafing about for a little in Mexico, I tried to put in a little industrial railway there. I did it, but it used me up, and I went home.

For a long time, in New York, I was unable to do any hard physical work. For lack of better employment, I then made my first attempts at writing. They were successful, and in view of the fact that I afterward came so to depend upon this work, to the neglect of my profession, it was perhaps unfortunate.

THEN the Spanish War came on. I was lucky enough to pass my examinations and was commissioned a second lieutenant of engineers. We were sent to Porto Rico. We saw no fighting; unluckily we were just too late. Probably the most notable experience was during one of my early tours of guard duty. Orders reached me from the colonel to apprehend, if possible, a certain Japanese mess servant, who had carelessly attempted to leave camp with a watch and some money belonging to one of the captains. As there were no Japanese then in camp, I obtained a detail of men from my own company, and another from that of a chum, and sent them into the town, under sergeants, with orders to take in every Jap they could find. Then I went a round of the posts, which was a long one. On my return I found the guard house festooned with pig-tails and chattering like a parrot-cage. To the sergeants, everything Asiatic had looked alike. They had raided every Chinese laundry and restaurant they could find and dutifully brought the results—fifty or more of them—back to camp. Luckily the wanted Jap was among them, but I never, during my stay in the service, heard the last of the affair.

AFTER leaving the Army, I had, together with another fellow, an opportunity to go to Ecuador. There we were to gain, if possible, the concession for a certain railway, and afterward to build it. The other chap was the lawyer; I the engineer. We went, of course, by way of Panama. There was a war on. We crossed the Isthmus on the last train which made that journey for a long time. When at last we reached the station we found ourselves outside the lines of a beleaguered city, into which it cost some trouble to gain an entrance, and even some violence.

The firing had begun while we still were some distance outside. The train passed between entrenched lines, only forty yards apart, occupied by men who were occupied in squibbing off at each other enough high-power ammunition to serve an army corps. Mostly they missed, it is true, but they couldn't always miss at that range. Yet boys of fourteen and under were there, never flinching, and doing their best. Some of them—I saw many such—could hardly stagger under the weight of their rifles, and I didn't see one who was staggering in any but the right direction. One-third the entire forces engaged was said to have been killed.

We passed under a bridge, a highway bridge over the railway cutting. I saw the upper side of that bridge the next day. It had been occupied by men, armed with Mannlichers, who were behind a sand-bag barricade, and had been charged time after time. The dead were piled like cord-wood tumbled from a wagon.

Now there was no reason in the world why this bridge should have been taken. Had there been such necessity, it could readily have been flanked. The whole thing was idiotic, looking at it from a military standpoint. Yet there never, perhaps, has been a braver fight. This is true of the whole siege.

Right there began my disgust at the standpoint, so prevalent among those who know nothing about such matters, that these wars are of a "comic-opera" nature. And many other actions which I afterward saw served only to strengthen this disgust.

AT LAST the siege was raised, and we went on, down the coast, to Guayaquil, and from there a ride of seven days, over the Andes, took us to Quito, the capital, 12,000 feet above the sea, and at that time the highest capital in the world. And a quaint city it was, its life much like that of Spain three centuries back. The cathedral which was remembered by *Ayacanora*, in Kingsley's "Westward Ho," still stands—with a sizzling arc-light hanging before it.

From Guayaquil we were accompanied by a friend, Don Roberto Andrade, a member of the Ecuadoriano *Camara de Diputados*, which corresponds to our House of Representatives. As he entered with us the great house we had engaged for our stay, he looked around and said to me—

"Ah, captain, I was not always as welcome in this house as I now am."

"Why not, Don Roberto?" I asked.

"Why," he answered with some surprize, "this formerly was the house of Garcia Morena."

"I know that," said I.

"But I shot him!"

And so he had. Morena was a famous dictator and tyrant—a Napoleon in a small way. Don Roberto had shot him on the steps of the Capitol; then thrown the body to a mob of Indians standing below, who hacked it to bits with their machetes.

HERE in Quito we were obliged to conduct a political campaign against the President and the party in power. It threatened, at times, to become very strenuous indeed. For example one Peralta (not Borja, who was another cabinet officer; I forget what) who was Secretary of State, sent for me, and I, refusing to obey the summons, barricaded the house of Garcia Morena, which he, in his lifetime, had thoughtfully arranged for the purpose. It was this occasion that furnished the idea for my story "A Ledge of Safety" which appeared in *Adventure*. The fighting written of there, however, did not occur then, but later, at many different times and places.

QUITO, perched on the edge of the great Inter-Andean Plateau, gave me my first glimpse of the remnant, invisible for the most part, of the old Inca civilization. The Indians, Quichua and Aymará, inhabiting that vast, treeless plain, surrounded by snowy peaks, and still practically unexplored, are the heirs of this civilization, and guard their heritage most jealously, in the form of what amounts to a great secret society, in the firm belief that in the fulness of time their ancient rulers will be restored in the sight of all men.

Here, and in Peru and Bolivia afterward, I had much to do with these Indians. I had to employ them, and occasionally to fight with them, using rifles to stand off the missiles from their slings of woven llama wool, which they use with such marvelous accuracy. As well as I could I studied them and their odd customs—cannibalism among them, on occasions—and their queer, sculptured legal documents, and their family records of knotted fringes. Of myself, I learned very little. Of certain men, who had made the lore of these people practically a life work, I learned far more, but still little. No one knows much of them, so far as I could find out.

AFTER returning to the United States, and seeing a little of the Sandwich Islands, I went to the Philippines as a Provincial Supervisor. I was assigned, at first, in charge of Tarlac Province, afterward to the larger and richer one of Pangasinán.

There was much experience to be had here, but few adventures that amounted to anything. Once I was threatened with attack, in the mountains, where I was sending a lot of convicts to work, by a troop of monkeys, which was funny; once by a herd of pariah dogs, who stopped to eat up those I shot and didn't themselves dare come near me; and once by men. I could not tell how many men there were; it was too dark. Three or four, probably. But my big American horse didn't like Filipinos. His name, "Chances," had been given him on account of the chances that our little brown brothers would take when approaching him. He reared, struck and tried to bite, and the attackers all ran away with no action on my part at all.

One very odd incident, however, did occur. This was when I was in charge of all the arrangements for the first execution, under American law, that ever had been made by the old Spanish *garrote*. Its strangeness consisted largely in the fact that the victim not only was innocent, but had never been convicted nor even tried, the crime for which he suffered never committed and the people he was accused of having murdered never existed. Incidentally I may state that this was no fault of the American authorities.

RESIGNING from the Philippine service, and after having a little to do with pearling-schooners, a little with a wrecking-outfit, I returned to the United States.

Almost immediately I was called to Europe and then went south again in command of the expedition that took me across the Andes, through a pass 18,500 feet up, down on the eastern side and thence into uncharted Bolivia.

This took me about two years. On my way once more I met Mr. Sidney E. Crane, whom I had known of old. Many people knew, or knew of, "Crazy Crane," but even so his fame was confined principally to those who had need of his services, for many of those who served him were unaware that they were doing so. Had he chosen to advertise—which he emphatically did not—he might have paraphrased the advertisements of some clothiers—"Everthing that you need at the shortest notice and lowest prices"—and so on. Only it wasn't in clothing. He kept what might be called a ready-made revolution shop, with mines, industrial railways or whatever else you wanted as a side-line.

I BECAME his "technical director." I think he paid me principally for the pleasure he found in submitting plans to my judgment, having me tell him that they were too foolish for words, and then ordering me to carry them out. The experience that I gained naturally was varied. It was when in his service that I twice gained the right to use the military title of "colonel" by which I am sometimes known.

The life of this man must have been one that fairly stuttered with adventures as a machine-gun stutters with bullets; but though Mr. Crane's death releases me, in a measure, from certain pledges of secrecy, the story of that life can never be written. What I know of his death will illustrate the reason why. He left me in charge of affairs and went away, without telling me where or why. He was drowned in the Indian Ocean. There was a typhoon, I believe. Otherwise the circumstances attending his end were one more thing concerning him that I never could find out.

It was I—of course with legal aid—who settled all of his affairs that I knew or could find out anything about. He handled, of course, enormous sums of money. He left very little.

THEN Uncle Sam reached the old rifle down from its hooks over the fireplace and proceeded to get after Heinie. Naturally one wanted to trail along. My growing years were against me, and I hadn't an ounce of political "pull." On the other hand from boyhood I had made a hobby of military science, and had also a very considerable experience in active service, and these facts were in my favor. So I went and took my examination for a commission and pleased my examiner so well that I got a major's commission and fooled myself at the same time.

To my intense disgust I was detailed as an instructor in three officers' training-camps; two in Camp Lee and one at Fort Sheridan, after first serving for a while in the office of the Chief of Engineers in Washington. Thence to Camp Humphreys, where I was placed in command of all the engineering recruits. At last my endeavors succeeded and I was given my overseas orders—and reached the port of embarkation—or rather, the camp near it—on the day when the armistice was signed.

Now I am again at home, awaiting another billet, which will not eventuate for months but which will, for a peaceful mission, be among the most interesting of my life.—WOLCOTT BEARD.

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IF CAMP-FIRE and our writers' brigade and your editors haven't been giving the rolling stone his due, it is an oversight and a particularly unintentional one. Here's to him:

Genesee, California.

Well, pards, if you will move over a bit, I will squeeze in and add a faggot or two for the Fire, as it may be cold. What I have to say is, why don't some of these pen-pushing, ink-slinging guys write something about the rolling stone and give him a little of the praise that he is entitled to?

What is a rolling stone? I think if we would look carefully, we will find a rolling stone rolling ahead of every endeavor. All inventors, explorers, writers, railroad builders are rolling stones, making a trail for others to follow and gather the fat while the rolling stone stays poor, but I think we rocks are the happiest of the lot. We make a living where most would starve. Just review history and look at the stones bumping along. Go back as far as you wish. You will find the rolling stone showing the way. For example, such men as Bruno, Columbus, Voltaire, Pizarro of Peru, Cortez of Mexico, D. Boone, D. Crocket, Sam Houston of Texas, George Washington rolled away and the greatest nation of earth sprang up on the trail.

As this is my first attempt, I will make it short, so good-by. I will bump along.—ED. MERRY.

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REACHING into our Camp-Fire cache, I pull out a letter from a Los Angeles comrade criticizing two of our writers' brigade for mistakes of fact in stories of prehistoric times. I sent the letter to both authors and with it in the cache were their replies. I'd say that their replies pretty well meet the criticisms. So far as I can judge, being no expert in the matter, the criticisms are pretty well wiped out.

I was going to print both sides of the case. The discussion is an interesting one, but sometimes I get tired of passing along these criticisms. You know our magazine frankly admits its mistakes, that it has always made mistakes and will continue to make them, and that on the whole its writers are both conscientious and capable in handling fact material used in their stories. To state the case briefly, *Adventure* writers have built up and earned a reputation for reliability.

A main factor in building up that reputation has been the unceasing watchfulness of readers. Our writers know that if they make a slip some reader or a score of readers will write in about it. That is as it should be. But, judging from your letters, you too are getting tired of taking so much Camp-Fire space for long discussions of the points at issue. Here, for example, are eleven typewritten pages from three people in the present case. Too much, yet it isn't fair to attempt omitting any considerable parts of the arguments. So I'm not going to pass any of it along to you.

There will, of course, be occasional discussions that are too interesting to pass by, cases in which the critic finds it was he, not the author, who spoke without his facts, cases in which there was a real mistake that should be frankly corrected in print, and cases in which Camp-Fire as a whole is needed as judge or for more data.

Each case is one to itself and must be handled as such, but in general we'll publish less of this kind of thing than heretofore.

Unless, of course, you of Camp-Fire decide otherwise. You readers are the general arbiters of what is to be talked about at Camp-Fire and what is not.—A. S. H.

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## SERVICES TO OUR READERS

**Lost Trails,** for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs that Men Have Sung."

**Old Songs That Men Have Sung,** a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

**Camp-Fire Stations:** explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

**Various Practical Services to Any Reader:** Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

# VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

**These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are** open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. **Whenever** we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between *sending* and publication.**

## Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

**Metal Cards**—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

## Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

## Back Issues of *Adventure*

*The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: All issues from First July, 1921, up to and including Feb. 28th, 1923; all issues from July 10th, 1923, up to and including Dec. 30th, 1923. Seventy-five copies in all, in good condition. $7.00 takes the lot, express collect. No single copies.—Address FARIS S. KING, 621 W. Flagler St., Miami, Fla.

WILL SELL: Mid-March to Mid-Dec., 1918; First Jan. to Mid-Dec., 1920, except May issues; First Jan. to Dec. 30th, 1921, except Sept. 10th issue; all 1922; all 1923, except July 30th, Nov. 30th, and August issues. Price, $10.00.—Address STEPHEN GEER, 214 W. Lincoln St., Charlevoix, Mich.

WILL SELL: Last four issues 1917; all 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1924 to date. Best offer takes lot.—Address ATT'Y WM. A. GOLDEN, 412 Diamond St., Pittsburgh, Penn.

WILL SELL: All issues from Vol. 1 No. 1 to date. Will dispose of them separately or in any manner, purchasers to state price and pay transportation charges.—Address L. J. ROWLAND, 1512 W. Ninth St., Sioux Falls, So. Dakota.

## Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

## Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the second issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

## Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognise each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *unstamped* envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

## Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in next issue*)

## Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

## Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

# Ask Adventure

**A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts**

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

***Please Note:*** **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

**1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts**
**4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts**
**6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts**
**8. Australia and Tasmania**
**9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java**
**10. New Guinea**
**11. Philippine Islands**
**12. Hawaiian Islands and China**
**13. Japan**
**14—17. Asia. In Four Parts**
**18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts**
**26. Turkey and Asia Minor**
**27—29. Balkans. In Three Parts**
**30. Scandinavia**
**31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland**
**32. Great Britain**
**33—35. South America. In Three Parts**
**36. Central America**
**37, 38. Mexico. In Two Parts**
**39—45. Canada. In Seven Parts**
**46. Alaska**
**47. Baffinland and Greenland**
**48—53. Western U. S. In Six Parts**
**54—57. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts**
**58—63. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts**
**Radio**
**Mining and Prospecting**
**Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts**
**Salt and Fresh Water Fishing**
**Tropical Forestry**
**Aviation**
**Army Matters, United States and Foreign**
**American Anthropology North of Panama Canal**
**Standing Information**

## Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote a better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Inglewood, Calif.

Really, narratives of my several trips have filled some hundreds of columns, taken perhaps half a million words as I *went them.* How then shall I write an autobiography? In "Who's Who" I am a paragraph in exceedingly small type, set solid. And the message I had for the world I wrote in local newspapers, hundreds of columns, trying to convince politicians and voters that they ought to think before they did—what they were doing. One time I ran for the N. Y. Assembly, a darn poor third in Herkimer County—on a motorcycle, at that. My platform included votes for women, prohibition, direct primaries—and, dog gone! Imagine my feelings, looking back, seeing those things in the statutes!

I wandered some hundreds of miles in the Adirondacks on showshoes and have slept in the open every calendar date of the year; camped variously in more than thirty States; rowed a skiff from the head of Thunder Bay to Michipocoten on Lake Superior in late September. *That*, I think, expresses what a unwise person I am.

I came down the Little and Big Houston Rivers in a five-dollar craft, and to Mussel Shoals, Alabama, on the Tennessee. I spent seven months on the Mississippi, in open skiff about three months and four months in a shanty-boat; and the fellow who picked my pocket, leaving me flat over Christmas in Memphis in 1903, tried to steal a rowboat from a friend of mine in 1922.

And every once in a while I rejoice in the fame that has come to some of the old *Sun* gang, with whom I was trying to be a reporter in the last two years of Dana's life and two subsequent years; and I feel sorry for other folks I've met when I hear they are in jail, or dead, or something as disquieting.

And, say, you ought to dramatize my feelings when I read about how much better some people feel in dress suits at the Authors' League on eating occasions than they would in, for example, the kind of clothes I wear as I hunt the answer for these "Ask Adventure" seekers for the true life!

I'm beginning to believe that it isn't what happens to us that amounts to much, it's merely how we meet it; I can say that in the face of the fact that the other day my bank account was six cents, and I had nine cents in my pocket. Worse yet, I had only four quarts of gasoline in the auto tank. Shucks, though! On that Saturday afternoon an "Ask Adventure" check blew in; the local bank is open from four to eight o'clock P.M. on Saturday nights, and they know me! We rolled all the next day!

I wish I could write you the tale of a year's-long struggle to know something, to be able to write clearly a thought unmuddled. I can't! If I did, the wail of my self-pity would give the radios statics. Sometimes, looking back through hoofing it, paddling, rowing, wallowing, pedaling, and stepping on the accelerator to roll in low over most incredibly bad roads, I ask myself how far have I really come? To what extent has ambition fathered the realization of hope?

Some of the inquirers have "come again." They've told me how they went down the Mississippi, or to the Great Lakes, or into the woods—and, glory be! They had the times of their lives. Feeling that sometimes I've helped the other fellow to see a sunset, breathe the balsam of the green timber, love the gale for the fight of it, and to stand on his own amid temptations and satisfactions of longings—what more could I ask?

My nerve adventures have been being scared half to death. I mean it. I was afraid of the dark when a boy, and I went back into the Big Woods so far I had to meet the Big Chief Bugaboo himself when the sun went down. And I have sneaked 'cross-lots through the woods when I was warned not to go through a certain mountain gap—suspected of being a detective. And I've skirted the brink of doom with my automobile slipping out of the old road over the Rockies at Berthoud Pass, when we met the other fellow coming down in the two-rut trail, and his brakes not working. And I've faced a bully with all the lofty emotions of a cornered rat. Lots of the boys would know what I mean.

When my spirit begins to perk up and my shoulders begin to draw back on the corners, fancying I've been somewhere, experienced something, I'm sure to sit in with some bunch, like those around E. E. Harriman; or I think of Charlie Siringo, 'Gene Manlove Rhodes, or Dunn, or Tuttle—or some of that kind of he-persons, which makes me humble again.

Really, I'm just a bystander. I look on. I go wherever the notion takes me, when I accumulate the price. I traverse vast, beautiful regions. I visit boot-hills, pony-express stations, famed rivers and noted passes. The longing to see the places where the big ones hit their stride, where brave men stood four-square against overwhelming odds, has taken me far.

Don't tell me adventures are no longer to be had. Never were there more opportunities, never such amazing astonishments to be endured and enjoyed as right now. And suppose, perhaps never knowing it, I should have the privilege of helping some one forward to his own chance for heroic accomplishment?

In every man lies the power more or less to do things in his own way. I've had that privilege a number of times. Often I do things most incredibly wrong—you editors know that. But my big kick comes when I see the glory of the land, the majesty of the mountains, the splendor of the deserts, or feel the shadows of the green timber. I have seen the dry and thirsty land blossom as a rose, the sunrise on the Rockies to the eastward, and the Thunder God of the Indians at sunset in the west. Granite Mountain and the rising tide of the mirage on the Great Salt Lake Desert—of such things are my adventures!

If I were made of more reckless stuff, I'd probably have livelier things to tell. I've happened into sundry things, but merely on my way to some vast valley or range I long had longed to see. I've sought facts with much persistence—data rather than personal experience.

Wonder if this doesn't epitomize—my autobiography.

Anyhow, such as I am—yours!

RAYMOND S. SPEARS.

### Australia's Population Problem

A COUNTRY bigger than the United States with only five per cent. of the inhabitants we have:

*Question:*—"Kindly send information regarding inducements offered settlers in Australia. I have been told that the Government will advance money for transportation over there. I want to know how to proceed to get a homestead.

Any other information you can give me along this line will be greatly appreciated.

Enclosed you will find a self-addressed, stamped envelop for your convenience in replying."—CLYDE LEISCH, Columbia, S. C.

*Answer*, by Mr. Morton:—Your inquiry would pave the way for a book. I can only tell you in a general way that Australia needs population and has to have it, that the climate and general conditions are excellent and that there is abundant outlet for brains and industry.

You see, you really tell me so little about yourself that it is difficult for me to judge just what you want. "Homesteading" in your sense is a wide term—it would apply with us from a little fruit-farm in Tasmania—which lives mostly, apart from the mines, by growing apples for the London market—to a cattle-station in Queensland or the Northern Territory. There are stations—what you would call ranches—into which you could tuck Rhode Island and still leave a large margin to get along with.

There is money in the land. Wool is an enormous industry. As a drawback there are sporadic droughts, a menace that will be largely removed or discounted as artesian boring and water-conservation go on. There are huge areas given over to cattle; but the cattle industry is rather hampered by the fact that one can't send chilled beef as far as London, and America has various ways of blocking imports in that particular.

I don't know exactly how the immigration concessions would apply to an American citizen. I should advise you to write to Sir Joseph Cook, Australian High Commissioner, at Australia House, London, and put your case to him. You can tell him I recommended you to do that, and you can rely on what he says. He happens to be of the rare number of politicians that are entirely honest men. You can get a reply from Cook in two or three weeks by New York.

For the rest, Australia is a bit bigger in area than the United States, and there are possibilities opening up all the time. Conditions of life are admirable in the main, and the cost of living is lower than in the United States.

Also, we have five million people scattered about a vast territory that simply has to be populated if it is to be held for the white race. The matter of Australia's population is one of world-importance, and your problems in the Pacific are our problems.

Happily a close white-Australian policy has kept us secure against color problems so far. The aboriginal peoples, slowly dying out under civilized conditions, are not a problem. They toil not, neither do they spin. They occupy a very primitive plane of culture and mentality. They furnish no grievous complication of intermarriage with the whites.

We have no Japanese invasion. The few Chinese who got in before the door was closed are hard-working, honest fellows who grow fat among us but don't amount to an evil, and the crop of Chinese half-breeds is rather amazingly small, all things considered.

The Australians themselves—I am a cosmopolitan of English origin, and can speak without bias—are a very admirable people—frank to a fault, generous, stanch, comradely, clean fighters, honest enemies, splendid friends.

When you write to Joe Cook drop another word to me, particularizing your needs and queries.

### Tramping in the Southern Appalachians

GREATEST playground east of the Rockies:

*Question*:—What is the average temperature of Knoxville, Tenn., in late November?

Does a trail lead up Mt. Mitchell?

I expect to transverse that corner where North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia meet. How is that neighborhood for hunting? What kind of game is there? Have a .22 Winchester repeater. Do you think that will be sufficient?

Are there trails leading across the mountains? Many farms?

I would like to pick up a horse around there. Any chance for a good saddle horse? Where's the best place? The approximate price?

How about snakes; many down there? Rattlers?

Do you know of a good device to keep 'em out of an Army pup tent with ground cloth sewed on?

Any other information or suggestion you could give me will certainly be greatly appreciated."—WM. BROWN, New York.

*Answer*, by Mr. Barbour:—Just two years ago I was knocking around the places mentioned in your letter, and wish I were there now. I can't answer for out West, but no place in eastern U. S. approaches it for Fall climate and beauty of scenery.

I can't offhand give you the late November temperature of Knoxville in degrees. It would be about like October in New York. Quite cool at night, perhaps with some frost, and snappy in the day-time, but warm in the sun. Most probably dry, clear weather.

You can get up Mt. Mitchell easily, but not from the direction of Knoxville. You reach Mt. Mitchell from the south. Go *via* Southern Railway to Asheville, N. C., and look up the U. S. Forest Service headquarters. You would go in to the Mt. Mitchell country probably from Black Mountains, N. C., where a logging railway starts and ends up a short way from the top of the mountain. Going out you might drop down into Toe River and strike the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railway.

Aren't you a little off when you speak of the corner where North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia join? Substitute Tennessee for North Carolina and you will be referring to the Cumberland Gap region. That section is not good for hunting, as the coal-mines have opened up the country too much.

A .22 is big enough for the game you would find anywhere in the Southern mountains unless by chance you saw a bear or deer, which are there but not plentiful. There are lots of gray squirrels, rabbits, etc., and some wild turkey. The .22 long rifle with hollow-point bullet will fetch any of these.

There are cattle trails on all the ridges, and a good many Forest Service trails have been built. Farms are found in many of the "coves." You can pick up a horse nearly anywhere. The price depends on your ability in a dicker. The Southern mountaineers are as good as Yankees in a horse-trade.

Snakes are not nearly so bad as farther north in Virginia and West Virginia. A few rattlers and copperheads, but nothing to worry about. In the late Fall most of them have hibernated. You could if you wanted to pin mosquito-bar across the front of your tent, but there is no real necessity. There will be no mosquitoes.

If you want a real tramping trip, I would suggest this:

From Asheville travel west on the Murphy Branch of the Southern to Balsam Gap. Strike north along the top of the Balsam Range to its junction with the Great Smokies at Mt. Guyot. Then follow the top of the Smokies westward past Clingmans Dome. Siler Bald, Briary Knob, Thunderhead, etc., to Gregory Bald.

Cross the Little Tennessee River and continue your tramp along the top of the Unaka Mountains, along the Tennesse-North Carolina line, ending up at Murphy. You will see the best mountain scenery in the East, travel most of the time at elevations over 5,000 feet and cross several mountains which go over 6,600 feet. There is considerable argument as to whether Mt. Mitchell, Mt. Guyot or Clingmans Dome is the highest.

The U. S. Geological maps for the region are worth carrying. You should also have a compass, a light hand ax, tent, blankets, cooking-utensils and food for a week. If you get lost, as you are sure to at times, drop down on either side to the nearest settlements. The worst danger is getting tangled up in the laurel "hells." If you stick to the ridge tops you can avoid that. You will find springs in many of the "gaps," usually a very short distance down the north side of the mountain.

I suggest two books to read: "Our Southern Highlanders" by Horace Kephart and "The Carolina Mountains" by Margaret Morley. It is a wonderful section and is going to be the greatest playground east of the Rockies when it becomes better known.

***Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.***

## Note from an "A. A." Man

E. E. HARRIMAN, one of our "Ask Adventure" experts, who is affectionately known to his friends as "Big Jim," has a kick. And I'll say it's justified. Here it is, printed verbatim just as he wrote it, except for the omission of the culprit's name:

Los Angeles, Calif., January 28.

This cockeyed skate, ——, evidently planned to stick me. Looks like it from the bill. Double night letter to me, a single night letter in response, and he hops the rattler and leaves me to ante, if the W. U. forces me.

I wish you would insert in the first *Adventure* you can squeeze it into, a red-hot criticism of such actions and a plain statement in big type that all "A. A." editors are not to heed such calls unless the telegraph company announces that the inquirer has put up the cash to pay for a reply.

I am glad to reply at any length necessary, to any reader; but I object to being made the goat. Never had much use for a swindler or confidence man anyhow.—BIG JIM.

## Trapping, Hunting, Prospecting in S. E. Alaska

CHOOSE your partner with the same care you'd show in choosing your outfit. Or with more care:

*Question:*—"I am planning a trip of a year or more in S.E. Alaska trapping and prospecting. My present plan is to outfit at Ketchikan and from there strike back inland along some of the rivers and establish a permanent camp and prospect and trap.

As I have never been in that section I would appreciate it if you will advise me if you think this plan practicable for a tenderfoot and also if you will give me some idea of the cost and outfit you would deem necessary.

Would it be necessary for me to have a partner, or could I make the trip alone? If the former, is it likely I could find a straight man to join me at Ketchikan, or had I better arrange that part of the trip before going in?

I am to some extent familiar with the description of the section in which I plan going, but if not trespassing too much on your time would be glad if you would furnish me with any information you might think helpful as to the resources of the country and the prospects or success of the undertaking."——— ——, Ocala, Fla.

*Answer*, by Mr. Shaw:—It's mighty important to have a good partner on a trip such as you propose. You've got to *know* your man; and this cuts both ways, too. I've had more than one expedition absolutely ruined through the objectionable qualities of one man. There must be accord and entire cooperation by each member of any expedition to insure success. A man may be a capital fellow and fine companion as you meet at your home or his, or at your club, or on the street; but when rolled in the same blanket, or dependent on him for a certain share of work, or for cheerful help when things go wrong, or when forced to endure hardship—these tests may find him wanting; or by the same token any other member of the party!

A man may also satisfy all the above conditions and more, and then if you discover something very rich may show a deep-lying streak of greed and lust which perhaps he himself never knew existed, and cause trouble or worse in trying to hog the whole thing.

It's some gamble to go to the Outer Edge with a man of whom you know very little; in fact, it might very easily prove dangerous. The veneer of civilization is mighty thin on any of us. Life in the raw, especially gold-hunting, is apt to scratch clear through.

The enclosed article, which I recently wrote in reply to an inquiry similar to your own, contains some suggestions for grub outfit, also tools of the trade. Regarding your food supply, you can readily see that no cut-and-dried rules may be laid down, for people's tastes differ. Meat can be absolutely counted on up there, so your list must have merely such quantity of salted meats as you may wish—some salt pork and some bacon or ham, merely as a change and for the "fryings." When on a trip I always use the grease from such meats as bread shortening when I made biscuits or cornbread. The best scheme, however, is to learn to make sour-dough; it is better bread for steady diet and more easily digested.

Prices on grub are little higher than you are now paying at home, except on some special articles. There is all the game you wish—ducks, grouse, fish, crabs, clams, deer, moose, caribou, mountain goat. You can start with provisions for several months, and it will not be so far from your main camp to take a few days' trip back to Ketchikan at any time for more supplies.

If you've camped any in the north-temperate zone your clothes will be the same, *viz.* wool shirts and underclothing, sweater, hunting-boots, etc. For the Summer I prefer riding-pants and leggings or puttees; they are best for tramping or bucking brush. The Kenwood sleeping-bags are economical for space and warmth, with the interchangeable fillers and waterproof cover.

Be sure to include a full set of oilers, with so'wester. Quite a bit of rain up there, especially during Spring months; but it is a warm rain (Oregon mist) and one becomes used to it very soon and you don't mind it at all. Never goes to zero in Winter, but snow gets pretty deep. The excessively low temperatures attributed to Alaska are found only in the far north *in the interior*, as at Dawson, Tanana, Circle City, etc. The coast range drops all moisture on the Pacific slope, you see. The warm winds (Chinook) from the Japan Stream make this lower coast country almost tropical, especially as it is far enough north so that you can read fine print at 11 o'clock P.M. during mid-Summer.

The forestation is extremely abundant, and all vegetation seems almost tropical. I've seen salmonberry bushes six inches in diameter, growing ten-foot shoots in a season. The hills are timbered from the sea edge.

Hundreds of islands large and small, all heavily timbered and mountainous. There is no surf, but a heavy tide of 15 to 20 feet. The whole archipelago is like an immense lake. The tides pull each way form behind the islands, and when traveling by boat you time yourself to take advantage of these tide-flows.

You can do little travel up there overland except along the natural watercourses. Therefore you must have a boat. A twenty-footer is O.K. equipped with oars and a single mast with small mainsail for use when the wind is favorable and to save the "ash-breeze." A motor-boat is great stuff if your exchequer will permit.

I can't tell you if you can now buy the proper boat at Ketchikan. I did, and it cost me sixty dollars. I believe I should now pick out what I wanted down at Seattle and have it shipped on the steamer; then I'd be dead sure of my boat and probably shade the price a bit, too.

There are plenty of supply stores at Ketchikan now, and you can get what you'll need there about as cheap as to pay your own freight on stuff bought in Seattle. This on prospecting-tools and traps, also ammunition. You'll probably take your guns in with you. I prefer a Winchester .30-40 for my rifle, or a .30-30 full magazine. If you want a shotgun for ducks, all right, but you can get all the grouse you want with a .22 cal.

The goat are up at timberline, and to get them—unless you chance to find one traveling across a valley—you take your blanket with you and *camp* at timberline; then you are on the ground at the time they are afoot, *viz.* when the sun first strikes the high cliffs. No moose or caribou near the coast, but back inland a way, where the lakes and swamps are, there you'll find them.

All the above as pointers, merely. Now for mineral:

That country has copper, galena and horn and ruby silver, but there is enough free gold in that immense batholith edging the coast from the B. C. boundary north to the Stikine to make it worth while to cut out anything but that. Veins of quartz, or calcite and baryte spar, form vein fillings between the granite and slate, and in many cases these carry gold visible to the eye. Fragments break off and are carried downward by landslides, floods, rain-washing, etc., to streams, or down hillsides. This is called "float."

Skirt the shores and watch all beaches for float, or enter all streams and look for it. When you see quartz with colors, make sure of its characteristics and hunt *upward* against gravity for more of the same sort. You can trace your float until you find no more and know the source lies back of you. If the vein doesn't cross the stream, search both banks as far as need be to come to the parent ledge. That's all there is to it. Simple, *n' est-ce pas?*

Lots of moss through the timber, but dig into the humps, which may be the vein-cropping. Watch all bare cliffs for the light-colored quartz veins, or yellow or reddish streaks, which may be weathered and oxidized sulfids carrying gold. Even if you can't *see* gold in some likely piece of quartz or spar, pulverize it in your mortar and pan the pulp; you often find more than a trace in this way.

Pan the croppings of all yellow-red veins and dikes cutting across the formation; and it doesn't hurt to pan the sands of the streams. Often there is a gold-bearing ledge near a stream which shows little or no float, but gold has been washed into the stream sands as a small "residual placer."

Now, where to go: Anywhere back from the coast and up any of the rivers suitable for a small boat. For you, I should say go up the north arm of the Behm Canal till you reach the Unuk River. Figure on getting to the mouth about the middle or last of May or end of September, as it is then low water. You can't get up the river during high water. You'll have to pole your boat up during low water.

You can go up by boat some 60 or 70 miles, and all that country is well mineralized. It is same formation as at Stewart, B. C., down at the head of the Portland Canal. The Premier Mine there is one of the richest in the country, and they are now overloading their mill capacity and making record shipments to smelters at Tacoma and Anyox.

About 18 miles up the Unuk the Blue River comes in from the right; and there is plenty of galena ore up there, though not much prospected, if any. In fact, you'll find lots of galena and quartz-carrying pyrites all up the Unuk on sand-bars and beaches.

You can go as far as you like and make a temporary camp. Then hike back inland for a day or two or three and size up the terrane. If you find a pond or lake with hills and valleys forming good shelter and good prospecting-country move your camp by degrees. You'll find game and fur all around up in there. If you find something quite big, requiring regular shipments later, that country will prove suitable as it is fairly level along the river and a road can be easily made to tidewater. Plenty of water for power-mill, too.

Bear, black, brown and grizzly, are pretty thick in there; and plenty of otter, marten, mink, weasel, ermine, beaver, wolverene, fisher and fox. There are timber-wolves all through that section. If you get to the B. C. boundary you'll find a small lake that is alive with trout; in fact all the lakes in there are. You'll find good moose-hunting around those lakes, too.

You can get a chart of the Clarence Strait section from the Coast & Geodetic Survey, Washington, D. C.; cost, around $2, I think. Also, apply to the Chamber of Commerce, Prince Rupert, B.C., for any maps of that country or the Cassiar. If you want more data write to George Clothier, Resident Engineer, Prince Rupert, B. C. He can give you special information on the Unuk and Iskut Rivers.

I am in close touch with this part of Alaska at all times, and this information is up to date. You'll find things right now just as I am telling you, both as to mineral and game. That is a tremendously big territory and will not be even fairly prospected for the next hundred years. It is now scarcely scratched with any man's pick. There are game laws as down here; but no one molests any prospector killing game to eat at any season. If you keep on U. S. ground you'll stake as many claims as you wish, and file and record at Wrangel, I think, though there may be a land office now at Ketchikan. Fee is $1.50 per claim, and $100 worth of work each year, to hold under possessory title If $500 worth of work is done on any claim it may be patented; and you get a Government deed by paying $5 per acre, plus cost of surveying and platting.

There is a place, that I know of, up the Unuk, where an old lava flow occurred—holes made by burned trees still show. From streams flowing beneath this you can pan good colors. I consider that country the very best chance, bar none, especially for a man who has not followed the game to any extent.

If you go, let me know, and good luck to you. If I can add anything don't hesitate to write again. I think $500 to $600 will see you through in good shape and leave you a road stake, too. If you trap in the Winter, you'll get $1,000 of fur with any luck at all.

ROUGH ESTIMATE OF COST FOR 1 MAN 2 MONTHS, EXCLUSIVE OF CLOTHING AND GUNS.

| | |
|---|---|
| Gold-pan—sheet iron | $ .50 |
| Magnifying-glass | 1.50 |
| Prospecting-pick | 2.00 |
| Miner's pick | 1.75 |
| Miner's shovel | 2.00 |
| Mortar and pestle—1½ quart size | 1.30 |
| Hammer, drills, spoon, etc. | 5.00 |
| Ax, double-bit, 4-inch | 1.50 |
| One-man, 3-ft. crosscut saw | 1.80 |
| Carborundum ax-stone | .50 |
| Dutch oven, reflector, or camp stove | 4.50 |
| Sleeping-bag | 12.00 |
| Tent—10 oz. duck | 15.00 |
| Boat—20-foot, mast and sail | 75.00 |
| Books—Mining law and "Miner's Guide" | 2.50 |
| Maps | 3.00 |
| Provisions | 50.00 |
| Fare, Seattle to Ketchikan, Alaska | 29.00 |
| Ammunition, rifle and shotgun | 10.00 |
| Miscellaneous | 18.65 |
| | $237.50 |

Traps will cost anywhere from $30 to $50 and up.

## The Durian

WHY should Nature develop a fruit that smells bad yet tastes good?

*Question*:—"Can you tell me if the durian grows in any part of Central America, Cuba or Porto Rico? No one hereabouts seems to know."—T. ELMGREN, San José, Calif.

*Answer*, by Mr. Emerson:—This fruit is sometimes round, sometimes oval, nine or ten inches in longest diameter. It has a thick, hard rind, covered with sharp, strong prickles; it is divided into five cells, each containing from one to four seeds as large as pigeons' eggs and has a luscious, cream-colored pulp which envelops these, and is the part that is eaten. It has a delicious flavor, but the odor is very repulsive; yet it commands as high a price as any fruit in the market. The seeds are often roasted and eaten; they taste very much like chestnuts.

Each tree yields about two hundred durians in a season. The tree on which it grows is called the *durio* and is originally found in the Indian archipelago, the only known species of its genus; it grows to a height of eighty feet, and in general appearance is like the elm. The leaves are entire, oblong, rounded at the base and taper to a long point; their color is a silvery red; the flowers are yellowish-green and grow in little clusters on the main branches.

This fruit is found for sale in the market at San Juan, P. R.; the usual way is to put it into boiling water, and sometimes it is toasted like chestnuts; but the odor is not attractive to many people. The plant was brought to the West Indies by the Spaniards, although I have no authentic records on the subject; am writing today to one of my friends in Porto Rico for as full history of the plant as is possible to get from the natives.

## Seattle and Vicinity

THE subjoined question and answer have been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely Ed. L. Carson, Monroe, Wash. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage:

*Question*:—"I am thinking of moving to some place where the weather is a little warmer in Winter than it is here. I have considerable experience in general farming and dairying, also some experience in raising garden truck. My capital is rather small—about six thousand dollars.

I thought I might be able to buy a place only partly improved, or some stump land, about 20 or 40 acres; or if I went into garden truck or fruit, 10 acres would be enough. I would want something I could pay for. Perhaps you can tell where I would be likely to find it. I would want to be within 20 miles of some large town.

I would like to ask a few questions.

Do you have much snow in Winter in western Washington? How long does it stay on the ground?

Does the temperature ever go to zero?

What is the coldest temperature you have had this Winter?

About what time in the Spring do the farmers begin planting crops?

When do you usually get a killing frost in the Fall?

I have heard that sometimes you can not see the sun more than two or three times all Winter. Is that true?

I have heard that there are so many Chinese, Japs and Hindus on the Pacific Coast that it is difficult for a white man to get work. Is that true? If I come to Washington I would want to look around a year or so before buying any land, and would have to find some work.

If this letter is published, please do not print my name or address. I enclose stamped envelop."—N. De V.

*Answer*, by Mr. Carson:—I am satisfied that what you are looking for is here in western Washington, but you will have to come out and pick it out for yourself. The enclosed clipping will give you an idea of prices.

In answer to your other questions, I am glad you asked them. The impression with regard to our Winters here is radically wrong. Winter here beats Winter any other place I have ever been, and that is several.

So far this Winter we have had one "snowfall," just enough for the kiddies to run sleighs on for a day or so. So unusual was this that when it came the chief of police in Seattle, who was a boy himself once and has not yet forgotten how it felt, closed certain streets to traffic and handed them over to the kiddies for coasting purposes. It was too rare an opportunity to be missed; and they sure made the most of it, for many of them came from the colder climates where coasting was part of the Winter's fun; and I have seen the poor little cusses trying to get a kick out of sliding on the white frost of a snappy morning when the thermometer was down to about 26 degrees above zero.

Don't grin. I know your country from Detroit to Mackinaw, and I know what you will think of people who regard four or five degrees of frost as "pretty snappy this morning." I have spent nine consecutive Winters in the vicinity of Seattle, and, while it may have gone down to zero as some will claim, I can honestly state that I never caught it doing so. I will try to get you a copy of the official weather records so you can see just what they are.

Farming goes on all Winter; that is, I see them plowing in December, January and February. Along the road between here and Seattle, where most of the garden truck is raised for the city, I have noticed them planting and picking stuff all Winter.

Spinach has been growing all Winter, and many other sorts of vegetables. A potato overlooked at digging-time will come up in the Spring just as well as if it had been decently planted, and many people depend on these "volunteers," as they are called, for their early "new spuds." As a rule, these are ready for the table about May first.

Carrots, parsnips, chard and so forth are seldom harvested. It is much more convenient to leave them in the ground and use as required.

The "killing frost" comes any time after November 21; that is, the frost that takes off the roses and the more tender flowers; but chrysanthemums, wallflowers, pansies and the like generally bloom all Winter. Of course there are exceptions but I am speaking of the rule.

That story of seeing the sun only two or three times during the Winter is a lie, pure and simple. Just where these yarns originate is difficult even to guess; but they must be the results of either ignorance or jealousy on the part of other sections. I can not recall a Winter when we did not see the sun two or three times a week at the very worst. I have seen it rain every day for two weeks, but the rain took the form of a warm shower preceded and followed by sunshine.

On another occasion—I forget the exact year—I was living near Anacortes and we had twenty-three bright, sunny days in the month of February. I picked flowering shrubs, growing wild, on the fourteenth of the month, and that Winter we never had enough snow to cover the green of the grass.

Another mistake is that the Orientals are a menace to the white man here on the coast. This country got busy in time and stopped the Hindu as well as restricting the others. The main objection that I can see to the Japanese is that he is a hustling little cuss, thrifty and intelligent, and he keeps his white competitor stepping long and lively to keep up with him, and perhaps this is just as well.

Your idea of coming out and looking around for a year is good, and I would suggest that you make Seattle your objective. Here's why.

Seattle is the distributing-point for labor, information and general assistance for the entire western part of the State. I have lived too much in the open ever to want to live in a city, but I can say that if I were compelled to do so, Seattle is the place I would choose. There is always work for the willing, able man. If not right in town, at least at some point adjacent.

Seattle is big in every way, and her heart is the biggest part of her. Here are a few examples, all of which have come up in the past three months. A prospective mother living east of the mountains in great poverty advertised her unborn child for adoption since the parents were not financially able to take care of it. Over fifty homes were at once offered for the reception of the little stranger; but after a day or so of reflection Seattle decided that this was not good enough, so a better job was found for the father, a fund raised for the baby, and a grateful mother was enabled to keep her kiddie and raise it as a mother would wish to.

Not long ago it was advertised by a news item that there were five rather nice dogs in the dog pound that would have to be killed unless homes were found for them. The response was a line of over two hundred people, all ready and anxious to offer adoption to the friendless dogs.

Another instance and I am done. A man who had secured a good job wanted to rent a house with the hope of buying it when he had saved up a hundred dollars to make the first payment. The place was for sale, not for rent, but when the vender found that the man had a reputation for honesty and a steady job he told him to take the place with nothing down, merely raising the amount of the monthly payments to meet the difference. The price, which was really reasonable, was left unchanged. Now this man was not a philanthropist; he was a real-estate agent; but he was willing to give and take a chance, and I am satisfied that there are dozens of others in Seattle who would have done the same thing with any man in whom they had confidence.

Of course they are not all that way. Where there is so much open-handed generosity there is sure to be a few grafters who will take advantage of it; but these are so much in the minority that they do not enter into consideration at all.

While I have never amassed any wealth in western Washington I realize that it is my own fault and that I have neglected opportunities; but on the other hand I never had any desire for riches, nor have I now. I may take a notion some day that I want a bunch of money or property; and when I do, if ever, right here is where I start to get it.

I believe Seattle and vicinity contains more opportunities to the square foot than any other place in America, and I would rather be flat broke or rotten rich in Seattle than in any city I know of—and there are several. If broke, I know that I could secure remunerative employment that would soon put me on my feet. If rich, Seattle has more to offer in the way of healthful amusement than any man has a right to demand. Her climate, her scenery, her surroundings and above all her people, are all to the good; and I am sure that if you come out here at any time you will agree with me. In fact there is only one man in the whole city I don't like, and he is a traffic cop; but then again he may have his reasons for treating me the way he did, so we won't have any argument about that. It's too hard to get the best of those fellows in an argument, as you may have noticed.

You may think I have handed this section a bouquet; but if I have I can assure you that it was richly deserved.

### Resources of Newfoundland

ANOTHER inquirer asking general questions which the "A. A." man did not have to answer if he chose to stand by his rights under the rules. Look at those rules; they're on page 183:

*Question:*—"I would like to have some general information regarding Newfoundland; mining, lumbering, farming."—LEWIS AINSLEE, Knox Bay, B. C., Canada.

*Answer*, by Maj. Belford:—A full and detailed report of the possibilities of Newfoundland on the lines you mention is covered by a series of publications issued by the Government of that Dominion at St. John. Write to the Minister of Lands, Mines and Forests asking for it.

Speaking generally, the country is highly mineralized, almost all commercial minerals being found on the island.

There are huge forests of valuable woods, with the emphasis perhaps on pulpwood. Splendid streams for running the logs and to furnish power. Large paper-mills have been erected, chiefly by English interests, the Harmsworth people notably.

As to farming, Newfoundland is not a farming country in the sense that Ontario, Alberta or the valleys of British Columbia are farming countries. But a certain amount of farming is done, but the farmer generally combines it with something else.

The great difficulty under which the island has labored is lack of capital. As a fishing-station it is preeminent, but its mines and forests have lacked development. But its day is coming, and with the great variety and extent of its natural resources a bright future lies before it. Study the publications I mentioned when you receive them and you will agree with me.

### A Motor Camping-Trip in the Adirondacks

FINE automobile roads right next to wild backwoods country:

*Question:*—"Am twenty-six years old and have done quite a little camping, but it has been mostly where there have been other campers.

It has been my desire for years to take a camping trip into the Adirondacks for a month or more, so have chosen August for the time.

Please furnish me with all the information you can. As I expect to go up by machine and wish to leave it in good hands and spend the rest of the time canoeing, where would be the best place to head for, where I could stock up and hire a canoe? Also would you advise me to buy a tent (6 x 8 is the size I want) or can I rent one? Must you have a permit to carry a .22 rifle, and what small game can you shoot without a permit? Also must you have a permit to fish?"—JAMES DURNING, Brooklyn, N. Y.

*Answer*, by Mr. Spears:—Over on this slip are some hints regarding automobile camping.

If you will read Longstreth's book about the Adirondacks (Century Company) it will give you interesting and general information of value to you.

The map of the Adirondacks published by Conservation Commission, Albany, N. Y., and distributed free, I believe, will give you trails and highways. A map of the State showing highways will give you choices of routes.

I should suggest, as you go by car, that you run around a little in the Adirondack region before you pick your location. A good road—fine—leads out of Gloversville, through Northville, to Piseco Lake, and thence a fair road to Indian Lake.

Indian Lake offers many inducements—pretty well back, wild, and good canoeing, some fishing, and is a good region. You would keep your car handy by and use it in going for supplies, seeing the country and adding to your pleasure, enabling you to change camp any time or where you wish to. This is merely suggestion—but worth thinking about. You can camp at three or four choice places. The canoe can be carried on the fenders of a touring-car. I carry a 16-ft., 42-inch-wide, 16-inch-deep boat on mine.

I'd say take on a complete camping-outfit. Car carries it! 7 x 9 close-woven tent—pays to waterproof it. Have it ready for the next year then, if you have the outfit.

Have to have a hunting-license (Game Laws. Chief Game Protector, Albany, N. Y., $1.10)—shoot red squirrels, porcupines, crows, jays (I think) and woodchucks; no permit except license required. Game is all protected in August, however, and varmints only are legal. No permit required to fish, but laws as to size of fish.

You will have a fine, backwoods, mountain-region time, right by the automobile highway in the woods. No need to store car. A good camp by river above Gloversville, first or second night; camp by Piseco Lake upper end; Jessup's River, Indian Lake, right on through.

# Old Songs That Men Have Sung

**Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.**

**Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.**

**Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.**

FIFTY years ago nearly every one was familiar with the sad story of *Young Charlotte* and her fatal ride. The song that tells this story is not strictly speaking a folk-song, for it did not grow up little by little among the folk. It was, instead, composed by a single author, William Carter of Bensontown, Vermont, about 1835. But, owing to its popularity and to the fact that it was passed on by word of mouth and not in print, it became somewhat changed as time went on. A careful study of the origin and history of the song appears in an article by Phillips Barry in *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. 25, pp. 156-168.

### Young Charlotte

(*Text sent by Tom Fanshier of Independence, Kans.*)

Young Charlotte lived on the mountain side
In a cold and lonely spot;
There was no dwelling for three miles round
Except her father's cot.

On many a merry Winter's eve
Young swains would gather there,
For her father kept a social board
And she was very fair.

Her father liked to see her dress
Fine as a city belle,
For she was the only child he had
And he loved his daughter well.

'Twas New Year's Eve—the sun went down
While looks her longing eye,
As along the frosty windows forth
The merry sleighs pass by.

At the village just fifteen miles off
There's a merry ball tonight;
Though the air is freezing cold as death,
Yet her heart is warm and light.

While looks her longing, restless eye
A well-known voice she hears,
And dashing to the cottage door
Young Charles in his sleigh appears.

"Now, Charlotte, dear," her mother said,
"This blanket around you fold,
Tonight it is a freezing night,
And you'll catch your death of cold."

"Oh no! Oh no!" Young Charlotte said,
As she laughed like a gipsy queen,
"To ride in blankets muffled up
I never can be seen.

"My silken cloak is quite enough—
'Tis lined, you know, throughout;
Besides I have a silken shawl
To tie my face about."

Her gloves and bonnet being on
She jumped into the sleigh,
And away they rode on the mountain side
Thus over the hills away.

There's music in the merry bells
As over the hills they go;
What a shrieking sound the runners make
As they press the frozen snow!

With muffled faces tied about
Five long cold miles had passed,
When Charles with these few frozen words
Their silence broke at last:

"Such a night as this I never knew,
My reins I scarce can hold."
Young Charlotte said in a feeble voice;
"I am exceeding cold."

Then he cracked his whip and urged his steeds
Much faster than before,
Until another long five miles
In silence they passed o'er.

"How fast," says Charles, "the freezing ice
Is gathering o'er my brow."
Young Charlotte said in a feeble voice,
"I'm growing warmer now."

Thus over the hills in the frosty air
And in the cold starlight,
Until at length, the village gained,
The ballroom was in sight.

They reached the inn and Charles sprang out
And gave his hand to her,
Saying, "Why sit you there like a monument
That has no power to stir?"

He called her once, he called her twice,
But she answered not a word;
He called her o'er and o'er again,
But still she never stirred.

He took her hand in his. O God!
'Twas cold and hard like stone.
He tore the mantle from her brow
And the cold starlight on her shone.

Then quickly to the lighted hall
Her lifeless form he bore;
Young Charlotte was a frozen corpse
And words she spake no more.

Then he sat himself down by her side
While the bitter tears did flow,
Saying, "My young intended bride
I never more shall know."

Then he put his arms around her waist
And kissed her marble brow,
And his thoughts ran back to where she said,
"I'm growing warmer now."

Then he bore her back into the sleigh
And with her he drove home,
And when he reached the cottage door
Oh, how her parents mourned!

They mourned the loss of their daughter dear
And he mourned o'er their gloom,
Until with grief his heart did break;
Now they sleep in one tomb.

In a letter accompanying the text, Mr. Fanshier says: "I am enclosing a copy of an old song that I have heard my father sing many times. He told me that he was acquainted with a man who was at the village where this young lady froze to death, at the time it happened."

The text as Mr. Fanshier wrote it down differs but little from others that have been collected and printed. Every now and then, however, a version or a fragment of one turns up showing a decided "making over" by the folk. These are of great value to those who are seriously interested in the study of folk-song, for they show clearly the style and mannerisms that the folk prefer. Usually anything that is characteristic of an individual—of an "author"—tends to disappear, and frequently conventional stanzas from other songs are introduced. For that reason, I should be very glad if any of you could send in other texts of "Young Charlotte."

And don't forget that versions of "Casey Jones," "John Hardy," "Stackerlee," and "Frankie and Johnnie" are still wanted. One of these days we'll make a mighty interesting issue from this material.

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions about them direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Avenue, Berkeley, California. Do NOT send them to the magazine.

# THE TRAIL AHEAD

## JUNE 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **four complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

**PIG** *Captain Dingle*
The forecastle held no human crew.

**DESERT FAME** *Frank Robertson*
A sheep-dog can do more than herd sheep.

**THE SILVER KING** *F. St. Mars*
How a salmon grew up.

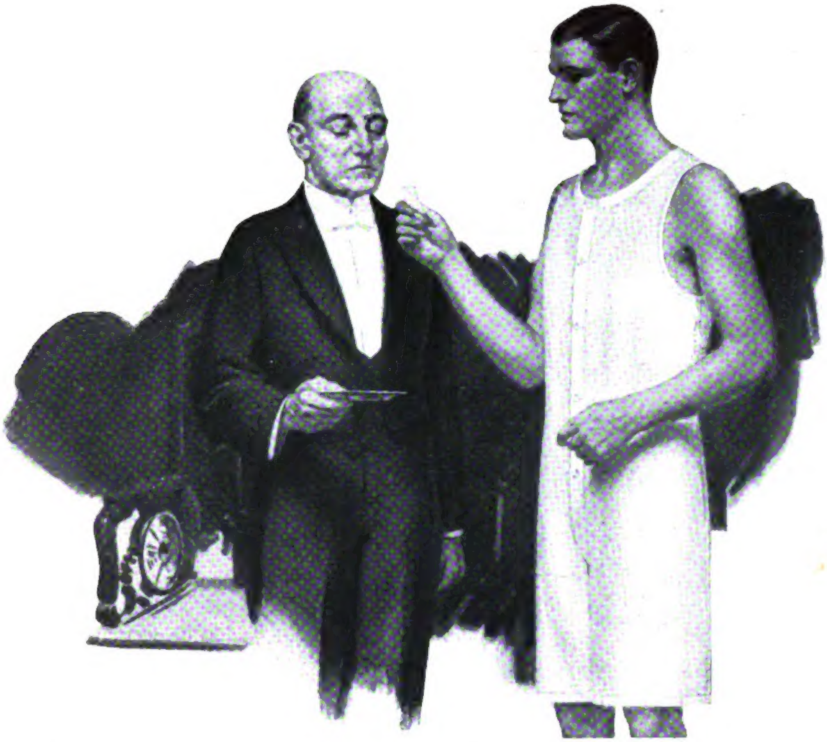
**NECKLACES AND DAN WHEELER A Four-Part Story Part II** *John I. Cochrane*
A night of fisticuffs and knife-work.

**FIVE FATHOMS DOWN** *Herman Petersen*
Treachery and pearls.

**THE AFTERMATH** *H. H. Perry*
His foot slipped in the air.

## Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Charles Victor Fischer, Gordon MacCreagh, George E. Holt, Gordon Young, W. C. Tuttle, H. C. Bailey, Arthur D. Howden Smith and Leonard H. Nason; and short stories by Thomson Burtis, Magruder Maury, F. St. Mars, Raymond S. Spears, John Webb, Clyde B. Hough, Georges Surdez, William Byron Mowery, Albert Richard Wetjen, Negley Farson, Bill Adams and others; stories of treasure hunters in Peru, desert riders in Morocco, gunner's mates on the Pacific, aviators on the Border, knights-at-arms in medieval France, cowpunchers on the Western plains, doughboys in the Philippines, buccaneers in Chinese waters, fur factors in the snow country, viking-farers in Mikligard, machine-gunners on the western front, pearl divers in the South Seas, hard-case skipper and bucko mate and *tirailleurs* in Africa.



# You'll wonder how Topkis can be sold for a dollar

EVEN if you had never heard of Topkis you'd be likely to choose it among any group of athletic union suits.

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